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Age Postmaster

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ES and JEROME H. EDDY

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The Village Postmaster

A Domestic Drama in Four Acts

By

ALICE E. IVES *and* JEROME H. EDDY

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The Village Postmaster

PLACE.—Bridgewater, a New Hampshire village.

TIME.—1852.

- ACT I—Autumn. The General Training.
ACT II—Winter. The donation party at the minister's.
ACT III—Summer. Threshing day on the farm.
ACT IV—Spring. The wedding in the village church.

NOTE.—Up to about 1853 in New England, and in many of the Northern states the law compelled every able-bodied citizen to assemble spring and autumn for a drill in the manual of arms, there being at this time no regular state militia. The event was a holiday of considerable importance to the villagers, and was called "General Training Day." The action of "The Village Postmaster" begins on this day.

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CHARACTERS

SETH HUGGINS.—About sixty years old, the New England farmer type, tall, strong, and sturdy. Inclined to be dogmatic and consequential as he is the most important man in the village, proprietor of the general supply store, postmaster, and “pillar” of the Baptist Church. “Bosses” every one but his sister Samantha who reduces him to a state of abject submission when the occasion requires it. At heart he is kindly, with high standards of honor.

JOHN HARPER.—In his twenties, modest, prepossessing and manly. Educated in speech and manner.

BEN DEANE.—A trifle older than Harper, less educated in speech, and more businesslike in manner. Carries himself well, and is always carefully dressed.

EBENEZER TODD.—Between fifty and sixty, with the rustic’s stoop shoulders and shambling gait. Has a realizing sense of his importance as sexton of the church, and a consuming ambition to win the hand of Samantha.

CHARLES GIBBS.—About forty-five, quiet, dignified, the usual type of the country minister.

CALEB SPRINGER.—About sixty-five, an old farmer, stoop-shouldered, but still agile enough to “square off” with Eb when there comes up the question of their rivalry for the affections of Samantha. Inclined to be rather querulous in manner, but harmless and well meaning.

THOMAS HUGGINS.—A boy about fourteen years old who spends most of his time plotting mischief, and making “Lowizy’s” life a burden.

SILAS TONER.—A tall, gawky, raw-boned young farmer.

JIM PENNEL.—A young farmer of a different type from Toner.

MIRANDA HUGGINS.—A young girl under twenty, pretty, attractive, and speaking in an educated way. Her manner is sweet and modest as befitted the Puritan maid of the "fifties."

MARY BARDEN.—A trifle older than Miranda, also pretty and attractive, but having a rather sad face. Her manner is quiet and subdued with every one except Ben Deane. Her speech is that of the New England rustic.

HATTIE BURLEY.—About twenty, high-spirited, gay, light-hearted, and being "well favored," inclined to flirt; but underneath it all generous and kind-hearted.

SAMANTHA HUGGINS.—In her forties, which at this period branded the unmarried woman as an old maid. She is tall, bony of figure, and bustling in manner, firm and decided in speech. Even when quoting poetry she gets off the lines as though it were a business to be quickly dispatched. She accepts Ebenezer's love-making with a kind of pleased tolerance, but never seems to make up her mind.

MRS. GIBBS.—A sweet-faced, motherly woman of about forty-five, to whom most of the young people of the village confide their joys and sorrows. She has the manner of the bustling housewife, but with always time to spare for a kind word or deed.

"LOWIZY."—About twelve years old, generally the target of Thomas's pranks, but able on occasions to retaliate with spirit.

LETITIA BEAN.—A young village girl, speaking in the "down east" rural manner.

COSTUMES

The year 1852 was for women the extremely prim period of dress. Bodices were tightly fitted, much boned, and finished at the neck with a white turned-over collar, or opened in V shape over a dainty chemisette of embroidered mull. Sometimes small fichus were worn. The sleeves were bell-shaped with undersleeves gathered into a band about the wrist. Skirts were full and round, just escaping the ground, and gathered into the waist. It is suggested for stage purposes that they can be slightly goared at front and sides. No hoops were worn. Bonnets were of the cottage-shape with little "curtains" at the back, and were tied under the chin with ribbons not over four inches wide. The flowers were small and fine. Gloves had but one button. Wraps were shawls or mantillas. Shoes were side-lace or congress gaiters, or slippers with very low heels, tied about the ankles with ribbons. Stockings were always white.

The hair was parted in the middle, taken down over the ears, sometimes puffed slightly and gathered into a knot at the back of the head, or the front hair was left to flow in ringlets, the back always being coiled. High foreheads were the fashion. Little girls wore their hair tightly braided in two tails, or loose in curls.

The dandy strapped his trousers over top boots, wore rolling velvet collars and cuffs on his frock coats which were much shorter than those now worn, and were fitted into the waist with considerable spring over the hips. The sack coat was long and loose-fitting. Dress shirts were ruffled, the pointed collar showing above a high stock generally of black satin. Waistcoats for dress occasions were often very fancy in pattern and of rich brocades and embroidered silks. The silk or beaver hat had a nearly straight brim and high crown something like the Parisian dress hat occasionally seen to-day. Felt hats had low, flat crowns and wide, straight brims. The hair was worn rather long.

It is suggested that the colors of the women's costumes,

which are given, be adhered to as far as possible, as the color scheme of the stage grouping was carefully planned by Miss Ives and found on the first production to be effective and harmonious.

SETH HUGGINS.—Act I, Dark trousers, and waistcoat, "soft" shirt, and no coat. For the training scene, a Continental uniform, blue with buff trimmings, cocked hat and old battered sword. Act II, A dark sack coat and dark trousers, contrasting color in waistcoat, black satin stock and pointed collar. Act III, Overalls, held up with galluses, checked shirt, wide, straw farm hat. Act IV, Blue dress coat with brass buttons, dark trousers, ruffled shirt, black satin stock.

JOHN HARPER.—Act I, Black or brown sack coat, light trousers, white shirt, flowing tie, felt hat, low crown with broad brim. Act II, Heavy overcoat and cloth or fur cap; sack coat, dark trousers, white shirt, high stock and collar, contrasting waistcoat. Act III, Overalls, white soft shirt, flowing tie, wide-brimmed straw hat. Act IV, The dress of the fashionable city man of the period. A well-fitting frock coat with velvet collar and cuffs, trousers of dark gray or black, a handsome waistcoat of white or fancy flowered material. High black satin stock, ruffled shirt, and silk hat. A circular cloak or cape may be added if desired and thrown off before the last scene. With the cloak a felt hat is preferable to the silk one.

BEN DEANE.—Act I, Sack coat and trousers rather lighter in tone, white shirt, stock and contrasting waistcoat. Wide-brimmed felt hat. Act II, Dark frock coat, and trousers, fancy waistcoat, high stock, overcoat, and cap. Act III, Sack coat, lighter trousers, soft shirt, flowing tie, felt hat. Act IV, Frock coat and lighter trousers, white or fancy waistcoat, ruffled shirt, high stock, silk hat. The cut of clothes similar to Harper's, but more showy in color, and less elegant and refined.

EBENEZER TODD.—Act I, Baggy old trousers held up by suspenders, faded colored shirt, dilapidated straw hat. For training scene a uniform of odds and ends, Continental coat and ordinary trousers, short and baggy, a private's cap, and old flint-lock musket. Act II, A very old-fashioned frock or dress coat, dark trousers, white shirt, and stock, seedy over-

coat and fur cap. Act III, Sack coat, light trousers, flowing tie, tall old silk hat, a palpable attempt to "dress up." Act IV, A long coat, evidently an overcoat, dark waistcoat, and lighter trousers, stock and high collar, old silk hat, carries lantern and keys.

CHARLES GIBBS.—The black frock coat and trousers, black waistcoat and high stock of the ministers of this period.

CALEB SPRINGER.—Act I, Overalls held up by suspenders, old straw hat, dark soft shirt. Act II, Dark trousers and colored shirt. Second dress, dark trousers, white shirt, high stock, black sack coat. Replaces high boots with congress gaiters. Act IV, Dress coat, dark trousers, dark waistcoat, high stock, white shirt, old silk hat.

THOMAS HUGGINS.—Trousers held up by one suspender, colored shirt, straw hat. Boys at this period did not wear knee trousers. Act II, A short jacket, something like an Eton, then called a "round-about," trousers coming only to the ankle, and showing white stockings, and low shoes, white shirt, wide turned-over collar, and narrow ribbon tie. Act III, Overalls, coarse boots, checked shirt, and straw hat with part of the brim gone. Act IV, Very new looking clothes. Short jacket and trousers same cut as in Act II, white stockings and pumps. A cap with wide, flat topped, bell crown, and slanting visor. From left side top of crown hangs a tassel.

SILAS TONER.—Act I, Farm clothes, no coat. For training scene a uniform made up of British scarlet coat, Continental trousers, and a very high bearskin shako. Coat and trousers evidently meant for a much smaller man, both are tight, sleeves and trousers much too short. He carries an old musket. Act II, Sack coat, and dark trousers. Act III, Overalls and dark shirt, straw hat. Act IV, Sack coat, dark trousers, stock, and felt hat. Toner's clothes never fit, and always seem too small for him.

JIM PENNEL.—Act I, Farm clothes. Act II, Sack coat, light trousers, stock. Act III, Farm clothes. Act IV, May be same as Act II.

MIRANDA HUGGINS.—Act I, Simple white lawn dress, and white ruffled sunbonnet. For training scene same dress with white straw bonnet. Act II, A changeable silk of

two tones, blue and gold, trimmed around skirt with rows of black velvet ribbon. White fichu or chemisette, shawl and hood. Act III, A pink lawn dress. Act IV, White wedding dress of mull or satin with veil and orange blossoms, and stiff round bouquet of orange blossoms, edged with white lace paper. Short white kid gloves, white slippers.

HATTIE BURLEY.—Act I, Pink and white lawn, straw bonnet trimmed with pink flowers. Act II, Red cashmere dress trimmed with rows of black velvet. Shawl and hood. Act IV, A handsome silk, white ground flowered with pink roses. A white shirred silk bonnet trimmed with small pink roses at the sides. A long white lace scarf worn loosely about the shoulders. Short white kid gloves, with black velvet bands and streamers around the wrist.

MARY BARDEN.—Act I, Blue and white lawn, straw bonnet. Act III, Light print gown of lavender or pale green. Straw bonnet. Act IV, Gown of soft gray or Quaker drab with long scarf of same color. Bonnet of shirred silk of same tone, or straw trimmed with ribbons to match.

SAMANTHA HUGGINS.—Act I, Dark print dress fitting as primly and tightly as possible, white collar, gingham apron and sunbonnet. For the training, Scene 2, A flowered delaine or challie, broche shawl or mantilla and bonnet with a feather turning out at an odd angle. Black silk mitts. Samantha must have a comedy effect but never burlesque. Act II, A flowered or striped silk or wool, green prevailing. Dark bonnet and mantilla. Act III, Light print gown and white apron. Act IV, A silk gown, fancy shawl or mantilla, straw bonnet, and lace mitts.

MRS. GIBBS.—Act I, Flowered wool gown with dark ground, sunbonnet, and white apron. Scene 2, Same dress with shawl and bonnet. Act II, Black silk dress made perfectly plain except for rows of narrow black velvet edging the bodice where it opens over a white mull chemisette. White apron in opening scene. Act IV, Same gown with white crepe shawl and straw bonnet trimmed with lavender or pearl gray ribbons.

LOUISA.—Act I, Short print frock, long gingham pinafore nearly covering frock, and tied over at back. Long pantallettes, showing below skirt and coming to the tops of shoes,

which are just to the ankle, not above. Sunbonnet, generally off the head, and hanging by strings tied in front. Scene 2, Same with white pinafore. Act II, Pink wool frock with white ruffled pinafore, long pantalettes, hair curled or braided with pink hair ribbons. Slippers tied about ankle with ribbons. Large heavy shawl which drags on the ground, worsted hood. Act III, Light print frock, checked pinafore. Act IV, Stiffly starched white mull frock with gay ribbon sash, white leghorn hat with ribbon tied in bow at back, long pantalettes, slippers.

LETITIA BEAN.—Act I, Light green lawn dress and straw bonnet. Act II, Light blue dress, hood and shawl. Act III, White dress. Act IV, Pink or green gown and leghorn hat or bonnet.

CHARACTERS REPRESENTED

- SETH HUGGINS.....*The village postmaster and boss
in the village, with political as-
pirations.*
- JOHN HARPER.....*The Methodist minister's son, in
love with Miranda.*
- BEN DEANE.....*The village lawyer, and political
"heeler" for Huggins.*
- EBENEZER TODD.....*Sexton of the Baptist Church.*
- REV. CHAS. GIBBS.....*The Baptist minister.*
- CALEB SPRINGER.....*Father of Mrs. Gibbs.*
- THOMAS JEFFERSON HUGGINS.....*A very bad boy, and a
heavy responsibility
to Samantha.*
- SILAS TONER.....*A young farmer.*
- JIM PENNEL.....*A member of the choir.*
- MIRANDA HUGGINS.....*The educated and lovable
daughter of Seth.*
- MARY BARDEN.....*A seamstress whom nobody knows.*
- HATTIE BURLEY.....*A coquette who knows her own
mind.*
- SAMANTHA HUGGINS*Sister to Seth who "carries
a stiddy hand" but will
quote poetry.*
- MRS. CHARLES GIBBS.....*A motherly soul with moral
courage.*
- LOUISA.....*Called "Lowizy." The help
at Huggins' "put upon" by
Tom.*
- LETITIA BEAN.....*Who sings.*
- MAIL CARRIER.

The Village Postmaster

ACT I

SCENE 1.—*Interior of SETH HUGGINS' general store, also the post-office, Bridgewater, New Hampshire. Door C. opening on village green. Window R. C. looking on green. Counter up stage extending from R. to door C. A case of shelves from L. of door C. to L. On right end of counter is the post-office case of pigeonholes for letters. On centre of counter is a cheese covered with a box. Scales are at left end. On the floor in front of counter is a barrel with removable top. Some soda crackers in the barrel. Two or three boxes filled with vegetables in front of counter and shelves. The shelves are filled with crockery, boots and shoes, and general merchandise. Back drop painted to represent shelves holding merchandise. A barrel and box are down R., an old rusty wood stove L. with boxes to sit on around it, also a chair L. of stove.*

DISCOVERED: BEN DEANE, C., EBENEZER TODD, L. C., *whittling*; and JIM PENNEL, L., *on boxes near stove. SILAS TONER near post-office box leaning against counter whittling. All men except DEANE are in farm clothes.*

DEANE. (*sits on soap-box C.*) I tell yer what, boys, we've got to send Seth Huggins to the Legislater. He's just the man for the spot.

TONER. (*leaning against counter R. C., whittling*) Wal, I've got to be pretty tarnel sure 'fore I put in my vote for enny man. What's Seth Huggins done to be put up by us?

DEANE. Done? Why, ain't he the richest man in Bridgewater? He is wuth forty thousand dollars ef he is a cent, an' I can prove it. We want to show them fellers up in Concord that Bridgewater kin get up an' toot with the best. Seth Huggins is plaguey smart, an' he can talk to them fellers till they're yellin' 'fore he'll knuckle to 'em.

TONER. (*doubtfully*) Wal, I dunno.

DEANE. (*rising, aside to TONER, while others talk*) Now see here, Sile, you know how the taxes have been gallopin' up lately.

TONER. Yes, by Jupiter. There's that forty acre lot o' mine —

DEANE. Exactly. Wal, I calculate we kin git a purty considerable drop on them taxes if we git Seth in—why, he knows Franklin Pierce real well, writes letters to him.

TONER. (*surprised*) Ye don't say.

DEANE. Sure's you're alive. (*to crowd*) What can you expect o' Dan'l Berry?

EBEN. Nothin'. He's so tormented stingy he skims his milk at both ends.

DEANE. Just so. Now ye want to keep yer persition as sexton o' the meetin' house, don't ye? (*crosses to EBEN.*)

EBEN. I callate.

DEANE. Ye know how Seth stands there.

EBEN. Wal, if I hain't got my eye teeth yit, I'm beginnin' to sense 'em a-comin'.

(*Enter SETH HUGGINS, apparently from cellar c., back of shelves from L. with jug of cider and jug of molasses. He goes behind counter R. As HUGGINS enters TONER moves down stage, whittles stick to a point, uses it for toothpick.*)

HUGGINS. Wal, boys, howdy do, howdy do?

OMNES. Howdy, Seth Huggins, etc.

HUGGINS. Real glad to see you. Hev somethin' — Got it all ready for the trainin'. Can't give ye enny-thing but cider, 'cause I'm a law-abidin' citizen, yer

know. (JIM gets up and goes to counter quickly, HUGGINS turning out a glassful as he speaks, handing first glass to JIM) It's a leetle hard, boys, jest a leetle hard, but 'tain't sperit and agin the law.

JIM. (at counter R., who has been drinking) Wal, Mr. Huggins, thet has got a fizz to it sure enough.

HUGGINS. (with a wink) It hez, hasn't it, Jim? Real champagne fizz. But 'tain't sperit, ye know, 'tain't sperit.

(Exit DEANE up C. giving a knowing look at HUGGINS.)

JIM. (passing glass for more and returning to seat with glass) Certainly not.

TONER. (up to counter) Mr. Huggins, has that quart o' molasses run out yet?

HUGGINS. (puts jug on counter) Yes, here ye be. (TONER starts R.) Scriptor measure, too. How's your poor mother's rheumatiz?

TONER. (turning back R.) Wal, jest about middlin'.

HUGGINS. You'll be on hand for the trainin', I s'pose.

TONER. I will certainly, Cap'n. (country military salute)

(Exit R. 2 E.)

HUGGINS. (comes around counter and pauses C. stage, anxiously watching TONER) Now there's a man that's settin' on the fence. He's got to be reasoned with. This kentry has got to go democratic, an' I've got to get up an' do a little laborin' in the field. I stand by Frank Pierce and he knows it. I thought I ought to set his mind to rest on that pint so I write him up to Concord t'other day. Ye see Frank Pierce and me are chums.

EBEN. (amazed) Ye don't say.

HUGGINS. Oh, yes, I know Frank real well, born in the same county, an' sez I, Frank, I'll stand by ye an' make things hum at 'lection time, but I won't stand no whittlin' down o' the planks in that platform, an' ye might as well know it fust as last.

EBEN. Jest so.

HUGGINS. Oh, yes, Frank Pierce knows he can rely on Seth Huggins an' Bridgewater every time if he don't run agin Seth Huggins' principles—an' Seth Huggins' principles ain't the sort to be run agin.

EBEN. (*admiringly*) Thet's so, Cap'n, thet's so.

HUGGINS. Yes, siree. Ez I was a-sayin' the Constitution — (*Scream from LOUISA and stamping of feet by TOM outside. HUGGINS goes down L. EBEN. comes C. LOUISA enters R. TOM follows. LOUISA knocks EBEN.'S hat off. EBEN. whirls around R., and bumps into TOM, R. C., falling into barrel against counter. TOM throws apple after LOUISA, C., and follows her out C., LOUISA screaming all the time and he jabbering "I'll catch you, I'll show you," etc. TOM slams door after him. JIM gets up and hides behind shelves, L., as if to dodge flying missiles*) Jehosophat! what's that boy up to now? (*calling, going to door C.*) Thomas—Thomas Huggins! He doesn't seem real quick o' hearin' somehow.

EBEN. Wal, he's pretty quick at jumpin'. Seth Huggins, you ought to send that boy to the house of corruption.

(MAIL CARRIER *comes in with bag at door C., throws bag on counter.*)

CARRIER. Look spry, please. Got to be gettin' on.

(HUGGINS *turns out letters on counter, R. C., and hands CARRIER his mail.*)

HUGGINS. How's 'lection prospects up your way?

CARRIER. Purty fair for Pierce. Ain't begun to feel streaked enny yit.

(*Takes bag and exits through door C.*)

HUGGINS. (*looking over mail*) What was I sayin'? (*behind counter R. C.*)

EBEN. The Constitution —

HUGGINS. Oh, yes, yes. Wal—the Constitution — (*sorting letters. Suddenly stops—peering carefully at*

letter. He bursts out laughing) Wal, wonders will never cease. (*laughs loudly again*)

EBEN. (*restraining laughter*) What's the matter, Seth? What is it?

HUGGINS. Wal, I swow, Miss Simmons hez heard from Japhet Pennel at last. These widows an' old maids are purty clingin' when things begin to look a mite streaked, eh, Eb? (*putting up letters in case R.*)

EBEN. Never hed much experience.

HUGGINS. (*running over letters*) Want ter keep yer trigger eye on 'em, Eb. Ye do so. (*looking hard at a letter*) Gosh all fish-hooks! if Miss Pettingill hain't got a letter clear from Philadelphy. Never heard she had relatives in Philadelphy.

EBEN. (*examines letter*) 'Tis queer, ain't it?

(*Enter CALEB SPRINGER, door R. He is a sort of no account father-in-law of the Baptist minister. Eccentric in make-up, and fond of a glass, though not a sot. He is EBEN.'S rival after SAMANTHA, and inclined to resent EBEN.'S attentions to her. As CALEB enters he slaps EBEN. on shoulder—EBEN. is going C. EBEN. doubles fists and shows hostility to CALEB which he returns. Bus. continued throughout play.*)

CALEB. Anything for me, Mr. Huggins?

HUGGINS. Nothin', Caleb.

CALEB. Nor for the elder?

HUGGINS. Yes—here's the *Intelligencer* for the elder.

CALEB. Been kinder havin' a lay out over yender, haven't ye? (*indicates part of counter where jug and glasses are*)

HUGGINS. Jest kinder preparin' for the trainin', Cale, that's all. (*pouring cider*) A leetle hard, but not sperit and agin the law. Won't you wet, Cale?

CALEB. Don't mind if I do.

(*EBEN. sits on box C. CALEB on box L. C., with glass.*)

HUGGINS *puts jug under L. H. end of counter.*)

(*Enter MIRANDA HUGGINS, R. 2 E., hurriedly.*)

MIRANDA. (R. C., *quickly spoken*) Oh, father, give me some sugar and nutmegs as soon as you can. Louisa forgot what she was sent for, and Aunt Samantha is all in a flutter waiting for the things.

(HUGGINS *takes MIRANDA's face between his hands and kisses her.*)

(*Enter JOHN HARPER, door C.*)

JOHN. (C. *Raising his hat and bowing to MIRANDA*) Have you any foolscap paper, Mr. Huggins?

HUGGINS. I reckon I hev, Mr. Harper. (*looking over shelves, gets sugar in package, and nutmegs*)

JOHN. Good-morning, Miss Miranda.

MIRANDA. Good-morning, Mr. Harper.

JOHN. Fine day for the training.

MIRANDA. Beautiful.

HUGGINS. (*with brown paper parcels*) Mirandy, here's yer sugar. Samantha told me about it and I had it all put up for you. (MIRANDA *takes parcel and starts*)

R. HUGGINS *continues*) Did you say nutmegs?

MIRANDA. (*embarrassed*) Oh, yes, I forgot.

(JOHN *smiles at this.* MIRANDA *starts to go R.*)

HUGGINS. (*with foolscap paper for JOHN*) Will this do, Mr. Harper?

JOHN. (*putting coin on counter*) Yes, that'll do. (*rushes after MIRANDA, door R.*) Let me carry those for you.

MIRANDA. They're such little ones. They're not heavy.

JOHN. Please let me.

(JOHN *takes package and they are moving off.*)

HUGGINS. Here's your change, Mr. Harper.

JOHN. Oh, never mind, Mr. Huggins. It can't be much. (EBEN. and CALEB *look amused.* MIRANDA and JOHN *go off together* R. 2 E. HUGGINS *comes out looking*

at two cents in his hand. Takes a small leather purse from his pocket and carefully puts in the two cents) Wal, a feller that don't think no more of money than that ain't goin' to get on in this world. (*down c.*)

EBEN. (*whittling*) I callate John Harper's got suthin' else on *his* mind.

HUGGINS. (C.) I'd like to know what's more important than money to hev on your mind. (*picking up whittlings and putting them in box by counter*)

EBEN. (L. C.) Well, Mirandy's grown up a dredful purty gal, ef I do say it. An' John—wal, he ain't blinder'n a mole in December ef he *is* the Methodist parson's son.

HUGGINS. (*excitedly, returning c.*) Ebenezer Todd, ye don't mean to tell me John Harper's makin' up to Mirandy?

EBEN. (*placidly whittling*) Wal, I only sed it looked that way.

HUGGINS. (*with decision*) Callate that it'll stop right here. I ain't got nothin' agin John 'cept that he's a Methodist an' a whig, but he ain't forehanded. He's allus buyin' foolscap paper, and writin' stuff nights, an' inventin' things that nobody never hears on.

EBEN. John ken draw a straight furrer.

HUGGINS. I ain't a-sayin' he can't when he's a mind to; he's ez good a hand ez ye'll git in hayin' time, an' wuth his wages, an' I s'pose with teachin' the destrik school winters he ought to lay by suthin'. But I'm looking higher for Mirandy. I've spent a sight eddicatin' thet girl, an' the man thet marries Mirandy Huggins hez got to be somebody. (*strikes fist on counter.*

EBEN. *and CALEB jump*) He's got to be a good clus communion Baptist, too. (*down R. C.*)

EBEN. (*crossing to c.*) Thet's so. I hain't nothin' agin the Methodist dominie; seems a straight enough sort of feller—but ye don't want 'em in the family—ye kinder draw the line there. I know, I know.

CALEB. (*rising and stretching*) Got enny more o' that plug chewin' terbacker? (*coming c.*)

HUGGINS. (*crosses to L. and L. C.*) Look back of thet box, under the desk. (CALEB *looks and takes out*

cider jug) There, never mind that cider. (*pointing, crossing L.*) I put it there 'cause the fellers was helpin' themselves too promiskus like.

(*CALEB cuts off liberal supply of tobacco behind counter.*)

EBEN. Hain't got no new cheese, have ye?

HUGGINS. Yes, there. (*points to box. EBEN. goes in where CALEB is, and helps himself*)

CALEB. (*coming out*) Crackers? Yes. Git 'em myself—don't bother. (*goes to cracker barrel R.*)

EBEN. Gosh, I'm dryer'n a graven image. Guess I'll draw some cider.

CALEB. (*R., reaching over counter*) Hold on, Eb, I'll help yer.

EBEN. Get out, I'll help myself.

(*CALEB goes and sits down on box R.*)

HUGGINS. (*who had been uneasily watching EBEN. and CALEB lunch, speaking aside*) You fellers don't seem to need enny help. Might ez well keep a tavern, then I could charge for meals. (*goes to counter as enter MARY BARDEN, R. 2 E.*)

MARY. (*coming to HUGGINS*) I would like two spools of black thread, forty and sixty, please.

HUGGINS. All right, Miss Barden. (*goes in behind counter. EBEN. comes out still eating. Crosses to C.*)

EBEN. (*goes to cracker barrel R. 1, helps himself*) Howdy do, Miss Barden? Where be ye a-workin' now?

MARY. (*C. and L. C.*) I am sewin' at Mrs. Harper's.

HUGGINS. (*with spools*) How's the pews goin' there? Do they seem to be gettin' on at the dominie's? (*hands her the spools over the counter*)

MARY. (*taking spools and handing him money*) I never ask any questions, Mr. Huggins.

(*Exit, door up C.*)

HUGGINS. Wal, I swan! if thet girl ain't queer. (*goes behind counter*)

EBEN. (*seated on barrel R. 1. JIM sleeps quietly*)

Allus thought she was. Who knows who she is, enny-way? Come here a teetotal stranger. (*Enter MRS. GIBBS, R. 2 E.*) Howdy do, Mis' Gibbs?

MRS. GIBBS. Real smart, thank ye.

HUGGINS. We wuz jest a-speakin' about Mary Bar-den. Did ye ever know enny one that knowed anything about her afore she come here?

MRS. GIBBS. (*crossing L. C.*) Dunno's I did.

HUGGINS. Wal, there's no tellin' what she's been. (*putting away letters*)

MRS. GIBBS. There don't need to be any tellin' to my mind. She's a hard-workin' girl that don't poke her nose into ennybody's tater patch. It allus seem to me thet what lay back o' her face had gone through the deep waters, an' I don't *want* to know about it. Ef the good Samaritan had took up *his* time trottin' around in-quirin' about the man from Jericho, he'd been dedder'n a door nail afore he'd got enny ile poured into *his* wounds.

HUGGINS. S'pose that's the Scriptor way o' lookin' at it.

MRS. GIBBS. (*up to counter*) Now, Mr. Huggins, ef ye'll jist gimme one o' them brown bowls and a nutmeg grater, I'll be gettin' along. (*HUGGINS gets them and gives them to MRS. GIBBS. She knocks the bowl to see if it is sound*) Good-mornin'; my respects to Miss Huggins and Mirandy. (*Exit, R. 3 E.*)

EBEN. Good-morning, Mis' Gibbs. (*rises, looking after MRS. GIBBS. CALEB seizes his coat-tails. EBEN. turns round, doubles fist, etc.; they glower at each other a moment and then shake hands and sit down.*)

HUGGINS. (*comes around counter, and sits on it, R. C.*) Allus seemed to me ez if Mis' Gibbs wuz the man o' the two. Though Elder Gibbs ken preach a powerful sermon when he lays out to. But I'd be a man in my own house, or I'd know the reason why.

(*Enter SAMANTHA HUGGINS, rushing in door R. 2 E., out of breath. HUGGINS swings around counter. EBEN. and CALEB sneak out R. 2 E.*)

SAMANTHA. Seth Huggins, do you know what's come of Mirandy? No, of course you don't. You never do. You're no more good 'round the house then a pine dog with a popple tail, a-settin' here from mornin' till night talkin' polyticks. Men folks do seem to have an awful easy time. No wonder the Lord made all the door-keepers up there out of men. (*she sees JIM asleep with feet on stove—pushes his feet off. He wakes up violently*) Women wouldn't know what to do with so much time to set around.

(JIM looks at her, says: "Gosh," and exits on the run,
R. 2 E.)

HUGGINS. (*behind counter, very meekly*) Samanthy, are you forgettin' that you are a pefessor?

SAMANTHA. (L. C.) No, Seth, I ain't forgettin' nothin'. That's why I am here. Such kerryin's on ez there's been this mornin'. It does seem rather more than I can stand.

HUGGINS. Now, when Malviny was livin' she never had a hired girl.

SAMANTHA. Don't talk to me about Malviny. That woman was too much put upon. That's the reason she died. Gimme that sugar, quick. (*crosses to counter. Enter CALEB and EBEN., R. 2. HUGGINS gets sugar quickly. SAMANTHA sees EBEN. Manner changes—smiles.*) Why, Mr. Todd, and Caleb, too—I never seen ye 'tall. You boys goin' to be out for the trainin'?

EBEN. Yes, Miss Huggins. I'm fust sergeant, ye know.

(*Enter DEANE, C.*)

SAMANTHA. (R. C.) Sure enough. (*half turns and sees DEANE*) Howdy do, Mr. Deane?

DEANE. (C.) Howdy do, Miss Huggins. (*goes and sits L. of stove*)

SAMANTHA. (*to EBEN.*) I allus thought regimentals wus so becomin'.

(HUGGINS puts sugar in parcel. Does not weigh it.)

EBEN. (*taking compliment to himself*) Do you really, Miss Huggins?

SAMANTHA. Yes. But I allus think o' them lines :

“ How vain the show o' martial arms,
The beat o' warlike drums —— ”

Land ! that sugar ! (*snatches parcel from HUGGINS, starts quickly toward R. 2 E.*)

EBEN. (*starting off after her*) Let me kerry thet for ye.

CALEB. Let me kerry it, Miss Samantha.

SAMANTHA. (*to EBEN.*) Wal, ye may. I'm some beat out a-gettin' here.

(EBEN. *takes parcel triumphantly and they go off together quickly R. 2 E.* CALEB *looks disgusted, and exits, R. 2 E., following SAMANTHA*)

HUGGINS. (*comes R. C.*) Jerusalem ! ef Eb ain't makin' up to Samanthy, after my warnin' him, too. S'pose he's found out she's got some money o' her own.

DEANE. (*C. and L. C.*) Thought I'd run in and tell ye I think Blake and Smithers'll come around all right 'fore the corkus meetin'.

HUGGINS. (*pleased, seated on barrel R. C.*) Ye don't say ? Wal, ye hev talked turkey to 'em and no mistake.

DEANE. (*embarrassed, at counter*) Yes, and there's suthin' else, Mr. Huggins. I've been wantin' to ask ye for some time—an' I didn't seem to git to do it somehow—I —— (*pause*)

HUGGINS. Wuz it them eaves-troughs to yer office ? Ef it wuz, speak right out. Don't be afraid to ask.

DEANE. No, 'twan't thet—wal, you see, I—I wanted to ask ye if ye had enny objections to my keepin' company with Mirandy ?

HUGGINS. (*much pleased, but pretending to hesitate*) Wal, Mirandy's a purty likely gal an'—no, I dunno's I hev enny objections—no, none 'tall.

DEANE. (R. C., *shakes hand*) Thankee, Mr. Huggins. Ye can callate on me doin' all I kin fer ye. But, M'randy—I haven't never sed much to her. Dunno's she'll take to me enny.

HUGGINS. (R. C.) You jest go ahead, an' don't you worry 'bout thet. M'randy ain't never crossed me yet, and she ain't likely to. I've allus been one whose 'pinions wuz looked up to an' respected, an' I'm *used* to havin' 'em respected among *my* folks.

DEANE. Wal, I saw M'randy walkin' with John Harper—I didn't know but they were keepin' company, —and —

HUGGINS. Wal, they ain't—not with my consent. (*crosses to L. and L. C.*)

DEANE. I s'pose then you've heard about his doin's.

HUGGINS. What doin's?

DEANE. (*crossing R.*) Wal, he hasn't any right to keep company with any girl 'cept one—and he ought to marry her.

HUGGINS. Who's that? (*slight pause, going up to counter front*) Mary Barden?

DEANE. (*starting, then assuming composure*) I didn't say who it was, but folks are likely to know before long. (*goes R. C. in front of counter*)

HUGGINS. Wal, if he's that stripe, he'd better not come 'round M'randy. (*looks at watch*) Lordy! didn't know it was so late; must shet up for the trainin'. (*turns to lock door*)

(*Enter MARY up C. DEANE sees her and turns from her, showing some fear. HUGGINS meets her.*)

MARY. Mr. Huggins, Miss Blake forgot the candles. Gimme two pounds, please. (*comes down C.*)

HUGGINS. Wal, ye'll have to wait a spell. Got to go down cellar and open a box. (*goes back of shelves. DEANE moves to R.*)

MARY. (C.) Ben, I want to —

DEANE. (*goes back to R. C.*) Sh! Mary, I've got something to tell ye. Ye see I've got my future to consider. I've got prospects, an' I daren't throw 'em

away. I ken marry where I'll git money, an' among folks that'll help me along in the world. You wouldn't want me by marryin' you to give up all my hopes for the future.

MARY. What are *my* hopes for the future? Hev you thought o' that?

DEANE. Now, Mary, don't make it too hard for a feller. I thought a sight o' you, an' I do yet. But better men than me have hed to set aside their heart promptin's for success in life.

MARY. (*bitterly*) You took me away from home, Ben—you took me away from everything—I daren't go back. (*goes slightly L. and L. C.*)

DEANE. (*slightly following her*) I know, Mary—but how was I to s'pose this would come up? When it's love or duty, love hez sometimes to give in.

MARY. (*turns on DEANE*) Don't call that kind of a feelin' duty. It's as far from it as night is from day. As fer the love that ken stand one side for money, it's a poor sort thet I wouldn't own to. (*to him pleadingly*) It ain't the sort I had for you, Ben. Ye know that well.

(DEANE turns slightly from MARY during speech.)

DEANE. (*ashamed*) I know it, Mary—I know it—I ain't like you, patient and sacrificin'—I never ken be like you. But I don't sees I hev a call to give up everything fer my own likin' in the matter.

MARY. (R. C.) Then ye *do* care for me yet, Ben—ye haven't forgot what ye said.

DEANE. Yes, I do care for ye, Mary. (MARY goes to him, arms about his neck) An' I ain't likely to forgit but it's all got to be put away now. (*they separate*) I'm goin' to rise in the world. I've got the faculty, an' I ain't goin' to stay under ground. You must understand that, Mary, an' you must never bring up these things again—never. (*sounds of cellar door closing off L.*) Hush—here he comes. (DEANE starts R. 2 E.)

MARY. Ben — (DEANE puts finger on lips and

exits R. 2 E. Looking sadly after DEANE) Never speak of it again — Oh, God !

(Enter HUGGINS.)

HUGGINS. *(behind counter)* Here's yer candles, Miss Barden.

MARY. *(starts and recovers herself)* Oh, yes. *(takes parcel, and starts toward L. up C., then stops and turns back)* I forgot—I was to pay for them. *(gives him money, and goes off up C.)*

HUGGINS. *(up C. Putting money in his purse)* Seems as ef everybody wuz keepin' company around this burgh, the absent-minded way they have of paying for things. *(locks door C.)* But, Mary Barden—so John Harper's the man, is he?—well, I must be spry. The Captain of the Milishy must set an example.

(Exits, locking door R. 2 E.)

(Dark change to Scene 2.)

NOTE.—Store counters, etc., on casters, boxes, barrels, etc., on linoleum stripes to draw out. This scene should be busy and thoroughly convincing. Should look crowded with stuff.

END OF SCENE I.

SCENE 2.—The village green showing exterior of post-office and general supply store at left. HUGGINS' name is on sign with a smaller sign below it over the door reading "Post-office." This door must be made to open. The back drop represents a country hotel called "Berry's" extending from R. to R. C., the remainder of the drop showing landscape, and part of the village of Bridgewater. Tab on right represents "Berry's Hotel Sheds." Tab on left continues back drop landscape. Foliage in autumn tints. Entrances R. 1, R. 2, L. 1, and L. 3 E. Bench at R. C., another bench up R. in front of hotel. A flagstaff up C. with a wooden box in front of it.

(HATTIE BURLEY heard calling from R., runs on R. 2 E.)

HATTIE. (*still calling*) Mr. Huggins! (*goes to store door and tries it. Enter MRS. GIBBS, L. 3 E. To MRS. GIBBS*) Ain't it mean? It's locked, and I was expectin' a letter.

MRS. GIBBS. (L. C.) Wal, it's trainin' day, ye know; ye can't expect it to be open. (*looking admiringly at HATTIE*) I guess some folks hez got a new bonnet.

HATTIE. (L. C.) Yes, and you sit right down there (*pointing to seat R. C.*), Mrs. Gibbs, and tell me how you like it. (*turns around for inspection*)

MRS. GIBBS. It's real smart, no mistake. But then you hev the faculty of puttin' on things. 'Tain't everybody hez *the faculty* that hez *things*. I'm thinkin' it'll go hard with the young men to-day. (*crosses to seat R. C.*)

HATTIE. (*crossing R. Coquettishly*) Why, Mrs. Gibbs! But you see my future's settled. I've been willed to a young man like a family clock or a second best bed.

MRS. GIBBS. (*surprised*) Harriet Burley! (*Drops down on seat R. C.*)

HATTIE. Yes. It's a cheerin' prospect, isn't it?

MRS. GIBBS. Hev you *got* to hev him?

HATTIE. (*sitting on bench R. of MRS. GIBBS*) Well, I don't s'pose there'd be any forcin' if I'd get right up and say I wouldn't. But *his* folks and *my* folks seem to want it, and I—well, I haven't thought much about it.

MRS. GIBBS. Don't you know whether you care for him?

HATTIE. (*doubtfully*) Well, I *like* him—I don't know whether I'm really in love with him—sometimes I wonder if I am. (*suddenly taking MRS. GIBBS' hand and speaking seriously*) Do you suppose you could tell me what being in love really is?

MRS. GIBBS. (*seriously*) No, Hattie, I don't suppose I could. The right sort is something like experiencin' religion. It's kind o' borne in on ye in a mysterious, convincin' way. Ye don't ever *wonder* if ye're

in love. The only wonderin' ye do is *when* an' *how* it began.

HATTIE. (*wonderingly*) Is it so beautiful and solemn like to every one?

MRS. GIBBS. It ought to be, Hattie, when it's got to last a whole lifetime.

HATTIE. (*pressing* MRS. GIBBS' *hand*) How you always help everybody. But you don't think it's wrong for me to have a little fun before I'm spoken for?

MRS. GIBBS. Flirtin's dangerous, Hattie. It's like them guns that ye don't know are loaded. Some one's allus gettin' hurt when ye ain't expectin' it. (*looks off* R. *Rises*) There's old Miss Durkee a-beckonin' to us. I want that picklin' receipt o' hers. (*crosses* R.) Let's walk over. (*stopping and looking back at* HATTIE) We'll be in plenty time for the trainin'.

(*They exit* R. I E. *Enter* JOHN and MIRANDA *up* L. *As* HATTIE *is going off, she turns, sees* JOHN, *and smiles at him.* JOHN *nods to her.* *He is still carrying* MIRANDA's *parcels.* *They come down stage.*)

JOHN. (R. C.) Yes, Miranda, it's a true one—this story I want to tell you. It's the story of a friend's trouble, and you must tell me what is right for him to do.

MIRANDA. (*sitting seat* R. C.) But perhaps I can't.

JOHN. (*with one foot up on seat bending over* MIRANDA) Yes, you can. You are always right. A man is betrothed to a woman in a will—that is, it is the wish of the girl's father that she would marry the son of his old friend. The girl is rich, the young man's parents are poor.

MIRANDA. And they want him to marry her?

JOHN. Yes. They have had the prospect of this marriage before them for years. When the young people finally meet, the man has lost his heart to another. He cannot love the girl whom his parents wish to be his wife, though he is told that she cares for him. Now, ought he to marry this girl who has honored him by giving him her heart—it would make his father and mother both

happy—or ought he to follow his own heart, which is pulling him so strongly in another direction?

MIRANDA. But the other girl,—the girl whom he really loves—does she love him?

JOHN. Ah, if he only knew. (*sits beside MIRANDA, laying parcel on seat*)

MIRANDA. It wouldn't be so dreadfully hard for him to find out. (*eagerly*) Why doesn't he ask her? (*thoughtfully*) Suppose she would be very unhappy always if he married some one else—*she* ought to be thought about a little, you know.

JOHN. (*quickly*) Oh, she is thought about a great deal—yes, a great deal.

MIRANDA. Why, John, you seem to know a sight about this *friend's* affairs.

JOHN. I do. We are very intimate.

MIRANDA. Why don't you advise him yourself then?

JOHN. Because I care too much for him to be just, and I know so well what he wants.

(*Ready—distant roll of thunder.*)

MIRANDA. The thing that is hard is almost always the right thing to do. He ought to follow what seems to him duty. It will come out clearer after a while.

JOHN. Do you think so, Mira?

MIRANDA. Is there any other way?

JOHN. But he can't, Mira. He's going to tell her he loves her. He is going to tell her whether it is right or not.

(*Enter DEANE quickly R. 2 E. ; comes to MIRANDA.*)

DEANE. Good-mornin', Miss Mirandy. (*nods to JOHN, who very coldly returns it and half turns back on him*)

MIRANDA. Good-morning, Mr. Deane. (*sees parcels*) Oh, those things. (*Enter HATTIE, LETITIA BEAN and two girls R. 1 E. JOHN takes up parcels and starts*) Give them to me. What will Aunt Samantha say? No, no, you mustn't come. (*crossing toward L. 1 E.*)

DEANE. (*following her*) May I?

(HATTIE runs up to JOHN.)

MIRANDA. No, no, I'm only going over to the house. I'm coming right back.

HATTIE. John, come here. Come tell Letitia. (*pulling at his arm. She draws him up c. He bows to MIRANDA and goes*)

(*Enter REV. CHAS. GIBBS L. 3 E., carrying flag folded, soldier with gun, and two girls following him. MR. GIBBS and soldier remain near flagstaff, and two girls join the other group R.*)

MIRANDA. (L.) No, no, Mr. Deane, I must hurry. (*starts to go*)

DEANE. But I've got to go up there on business. Can't I carry them?

MIRANDA. Oh, very well, come along, then.

(*They exit together L. I E. JOHN comes away from the group and crosses to L., watching them.*)

(*Enter CALEB, with gun, L. C.; joins MR. GIBBS and soldier, whom he salutes.*)

JOHN. She let him go with her, that sneak. Does she care for him? No, no, I can't believe it.

HATTIE. (*coming down to him*) John, what is the matter? Why, you look like a thunder-cloud.

(*Distant roll of thunder.*)

JOHN. Do I? Well, I'm not the only one. Look up there. (*points to sky*)

HATTIE. Oh, dear! do you suppose it's going to rain?

JOHN. I wouldn't be surprised.

HATTIE. And my new bonnet! Oh, John, just think of it.

JOHN. Let me go and get you an umbrella. (*starting L.*)

HATTIE. (*restraining him*) No, you won't. You'll

forget to come back. You come here, now, and tell Letitia what you are going to do.

JOHN. But, Hattie —

(*Enter two girls, R. 1 E., and join the others. CALEB and man move bench from R. C. down R. of L. 2 E.*)

HATTIE. Come along. (*drags him back to group R.*)

LETITIA. Say, girls, let's have a dance.

HATTIE. What will Mr. Huggins and Elder Gibbs say?

LETITIA. Oh, who cares? Come on.

(*Village dance for girls. For description of dance see end of Act I. During dance MR. GIBBS raises flag on staff. Men cheer three times and then stand clapping time to music. JOHN on box. After dance JOHN joins HATTIE and LETITIA, who, with the other girls, run up stage and stand about R. and R. C.*)

(*Ready—rain and thunder.*)

(*Enter HUGGINS, L. 3 E., dressed in uniform and wearing sword. He goes to store, takes out key from pocket, opens door, enters and brings out bottles and glasses, which he sets on bench beside door. Locks door again. Enter EBEN., R. 1 E., while HUGGINS is setting out things. He wears military trousers, ordinary dress coat, a cap with shako, and carries old flint-lock. EBEN. marches in a rickety manner across the stage, hemming and hawing to draw attention to himself, marches up R., and after crossing guns with CALEB, sets his gun against bench L. C.*)

HATTIE. (*before EBEN. enters—looking off R. To girls*) Oh, girls, 'do look at Ebenezer Todd. Guess there has been a mutiny amongst his clothes, an' some of his regimentals deserted.

(*EBEN. helps HUGGINS bring out glasses.*)

LETITIA. Don't say nothin'. (*pointing*) Sile's got

'em. (*enter TONER, L. I E., wearing a military coat, striped black and white trousers and a drum-major's hat, carrying a gun with bayonet. LETITIA meets him C. His hat tumbles off as she pokes him*) Goin' to war, Sile?

TONER. Nary; callate my folks want me for home consumption. (*goes up L.*)

(*Enter JIM, R. I E., carrying gun; marches C., makes military turn and goes up C. to TONER. Enter DEANE and MIRANDA, L. I E. HUGGINS and EBEN. come to C. from store.*)

HUGGINS. (*looking up to sky*) Bet a gold dollar we don't get to drill to-day. There's an old thunder clapper coming up in the west. Likely to rain cats and dogs afore we get through.

(*Girls look up at the clouds, then at their dresses and show apprehension.*)

EBEN. You're right, Seth. Looks mighty lowery. (*scanning HUGGINS' sword*) Old timer, ain't it?

HUGGINS. (*proudly*) Yes. Was fit with in the Revolution. Come back from Concord with that same dent. (*pointing to dent*)

EBEN. Gosh! It must have hit a rock.

(*During this speech TONER is seen gathering some men together up L. He comes down to HUGGINS, leading men. HUGGINS goes down R. C. at the same time that LOUISA comes on at L. I E. She goes to store door, looks at the array of bottles, and creeping up cautiously, takes up one, and drinks long and deeply. As all are watching HUGGINS and TONER, no one sees her. This business takes place during following speech. EBEN. gives his arm to SAMANTHA, and leads her up R.*)

TONER. Mr. Huggins, I've been apinted spokesman of a delegation to wait on ye, an' get yer sentiments regardin' the nomination. Ain't that 'bout it, gentlemen?

ALL. (*coming down R. C. slightly*) Yes, that's it. Go ahead.

TONER. Now, the first thing is, are you sound on the constitution?

HUGGINS. What?

TONER. Are you sound on the constitution?

(*All cheer as HUGGINS goes up stage to speak.*)

HUGGINS. (*drawing himself up. Gets up on box*) Feller citizens, I'm a Democrat.

(*Crowd cheers.*)

(*Enter TOM, L. I E. ; sees LOUISA, who does not see him.*

TOM *creeps up behind her, while her head is thrown back drinking from bottle, seizes the two small braids which stick out from the back of her head like spikes, pulls them violently, which causes her to drop the bottle. LOUISA screams. All turn. LOUISA flying exits cross stage to R. I E. TOM takes up bottle, throwing his head back, begins to drink.*)

JIM. Wal, that's all right bein' a Democrat. But we want to know what yer goin' to do for this town?

TONER. Yes, Mr. Huggins, what ye goin' ter do for Bridgewater? (*SAMANTHA sees TOM and glides quietly up behind him, taking him by the ear and bringing his drink abruptly to a close. Takes the bottle from him, looks in it, seems horrified at his deep potations, cuffs the other ear, sets down bottle and walks him down stage, R., still holding him by the ear*) There's that North turnpike, there's the taxes want whittling down, and there ought to be new front steps to the schoolhouse, to say nothing of the chimbley that can't be made to draw.

HUGGINS. I hev said, feller citizens, thet I am a Democrat, an' a Democrat is not likely to forget his constitoants. (*JIM lets out an individual cheer. HUGGINS says "Thank you," and JIM bows his acknowledgments*) I hev thought of that turnpike. I hev thought of them steps, and I hev thought of—(*hesitating as if out of ideas*) a lot of other things. (*LOUISA enters, R. 2 E., and goes*

back of crowd to L., near bottles) And—— (*stops again*) Wal, wait till I'm elected. Ef I don't make them fellers thet's shellin' out appropriations here and new roads there, an' lighthouses an' all thet tormented foolishness—— (*LOUISA drinks again*) Ef I don't make them rest a spell, while I set some of them dollars a-rollin' down into Bridgewater, my name ain't Seth Huggins, thet's all. (*gets down from box*)

ALL. Thet's it! Hooray for Seth Huggins!

(*Exit MR. GIBBS. Women clap hands and wave handkerchiefs. SAMANTHA, in her excitement, forgets TOM, and lets go his ear. TOM darts toward LOUISA, who drops bottle and runs screaming off R. 1 E., TOM following. HUGGINS goes down to bench L., preparing glasses, etc. EBEN. takes gun from bench and sets it against house L. of door L. 2 E. As LOUISA flies screaming before TOM across foot-lights, SAMANTHA gets excited, strikes at TOM as he passes her, misses him, swings clear around, drops umbrella and runs up to rebuke TONER, L. C., who is laughing at her. EBEN. joins her, and TONER salutes in acknowledgment. EBEN. leads SAMANTHA up R. TOM enters, R. 1 E.; goes over to L. 2 E. Takes EBEN.'s gun to C. Military bus.; marches off L. 1 E.*)

HUGGINS. (*at bench L.*) Come up and hev something. Cider, ginger beer, anything there is. (*pours cider into glasses. All except SAMANTHA and EBEN. drink, dispersing as follows. JOHN, HATTIE and LETITIA down L. MIRANDA and DEANE up C. TONER, C. CALEB and SOLDIER up C. and L. Girls dress stage R. JIM at bench. HUGGINS turns to JIM*) How's yer boy, Jim? Heard he had the chicken-pox.

JIM. Middlin', thank ye. (*HUGGINS goes L. C., JIM to TONER, C.*) Seth Huggins never asked arter my folks afore. How he has changed all of a sudden.

EBEN. Gosh! it's raining over at the meeting-house now, sure as you're born. It's liable to come down on us any minnit. (*girls look distressed*)

HUGGINS. (C.) Well, we hain't feather-bed soldiers, Eb Todd, and I guess if I kin stand it you kin.

EBEN. Yes, Captain. (*salutes and then rejoins SAMANTHA*)

(*Band off up L.*)

HUGGINS. Comes, boys, the band is a-comin'.

(*Enter the band up L. Cheers.*)

(*Bus. of band. SAMANTHA and EBEN. go up L. 3 E. DEANE and MIRANDA go down R. 1 E. JOHN, HATTIE and LETITIA skip up R. JIM and TONER stand C., facing R. and keeping time with feet, TONER out of rhythm. CALEB marches awkwardly across L. U. Girls about R. HUGGINS goes up L. C. to meet band leading them around stage R. Band consists of three couples. They come down and across footlights to L. up and across C. single file, forming line C., then down to footlights, counter-march toward the L., up and down L. in couples, forming there in two lines facing C. EBEN. and SAMANTHA follow band on and around until they start C. to form line. EBEN. and SAMANTHA going on up L. and around to R. U. TONER and JIM fall in behind SAMANTHA and EBEN. as they pass down the first time stopping down R., facing C. and doing the same bus. as before. All of the others dance about in their same relative positions as soon as the band starts up, waving handkerchiefs, moving in and out and showing great animation. Band stops playing as it stops marching.*)

HUGGINS. (L. C.) Three cheers for the Bridgewater Village Brass Band. Hip! Hip! Hip!!

ALL. Hooray! (*drums roll, handkerchiefs wave*)

HUGGINS. Hip! Hip! Hip!

ALL. Hooray! (*same bus.*)

HUGGINS. Hip! Hip! Hip!

ALL. Hooray! (*same bus.*)

HUGGINS. Tiger!

ALL. Ah!

(Band plays "Yankee Doodle" and all dance as before. Band goes up L. and remains there until rain commences to fall when they all exit hurriedly L. 3 E., playing "Hail Columbia.")

HUGGINS. Now, boys, fall in, and we'll have a drill. *(supers, TONER, JIM and CALEB form in line down c. To TONER)* Turn those toes out. *(to JIM)* Turn those toes in. *(ad lib. Bus. with sword knocking toes)*

EBEN. *(looking wildly for his gun)* Drat that gun! I swear! If it ain't gone. Who's got my gun? *(runs up to others. SAMANTHA joins in the search)*

HUGGINS. *(impatiently, the others all in line)* Wal, fall in, fall in.

EBEN. Putting on airs, be'nt you?

HUGGINS. No, I ain't. Fall in.

EBEN. Gol darn it. How'm I goin' to fall in without my gun?

HUGGINS. Fall in.

EBEN. Fall in when I get good and ready. I'd wrestle you for two cents. I'll take you out in the meadow, and mow your legs off.

(Rain falls heavily. Thunder.)

HUGGINS. This ain't a hay day.

(All scream and rush up under shed R. U. TONER sprawls flat, going U. EBEN. raises SAMANTHA'S umbrella down R. and runs up stage with her, then returns with umbrella L. H. side of HUGGINS, who comes down with him. TOM comes on with gun L. 3 E., fires it off in the air. Women scream. TOM drops gun. EBEN. leaving umbrella with HUGGINS C. pursues TOM to L. 2 E. and spansks him as curtain descends.)

(Second picture same. All pointing to EBEN. and TOM, and laughing.)

CURTAIN

VILLAGE DANCE

Eight girls, four couples.

FIRST FIGURE.—*Position at opening and close.*
(*Cue for music: "Who cares? Come on!"*)

1st eight beats takes them to corners.

2d eight beats takes them back to c., where they clap hands and curtsy.

NOTE: Whenever hands are disengaged they should be holding up skirts slightly in front; elbows close to sides, like prim little Puritan maidens. Whenever not otherwise moving, girls should be balancing to partners. Little joyous laughs and screams should punctuate the dance at 3 and at close of figure.

3d measure (1st half) takes all back to position again.

In 2nd half couples (1-2) and (5-6) cross stage, 1 passing between 5 and 6. (3-4) and (7-8) are balancing.

4th measure. Couples (3-4) and (7-8) change places, 4 passing between 7 and 8. All balance.

5th measure. All balance.

6th measure. All swing partners.

7th and 8th measures, circle to the right half-way around stage to positions, clap hands and curtsy on last beat.

NOTE: Balance step is one foot over the other, commencing right foot over left on first beat of measure. The step when not balancing is a simple skip.

(Slight pause in music between figures.)

SECOND FIGURE:

1st eight beats takes them to 3. On the eighth beat all turn around facing out and lock elbows.

2d eight beats (1st half) circle half-way around to the right where 4 and 5 break, 5 going on around in 2d half of measure, leading her end up L. and down, while 4 leads her end down by footlights and around to meet 5, thus turning the circle inside out, with all hands clasped.

3d eight beats. 4 and 5 break again, straightening the circle into a line thus :

4 3 2 1 8 7 6

4th eight beats brings them into position for balancing to their neighbors, as above.

5th eight beats, balance and swing opposite half around with right hand.

6th eight beats. Swing partner to place with left hands. Curtsey and clap on last beat.

(Slight pause in music.)

THIRD FIGURE :

1st four beats brings all to center in a circle, break hands and all circle to left around (1-2) who take up position c. Line forms as the others circle around them, 3 stopping next to 1, 4 next to 2, 5 next to 3, 6 next to 4, 7 next to 5 and 8 next to 6, thus :

7 5 3 1 2 4 6 8
o o o o o o o o

All balance down in a close line and back again, eight beats each way. (1-2) remain c. 7 leads 5 and 3 around down R., facing c., and 8 leads 6 and 4 around down L. facing c. (1-2) balance down and back eight beats each way. Side lines balance backward and forward, eight beats each way, clapping hands. Next eight beats take all down to footlights as follows :

First, (1-2) dance directly down L. 8 dances back of them over to 7 and they take their position R. 6 then dances over to 5 and takes her down next to (1-2) (7-8). All take hold of hands and balance out the measure at footlights.

At the beginning of the next measure, 4 leads 3, 8 and 7 up L. down around across footlights and up R., 5 leads 6, 1 and 2 up R. down around across footlights and up L., 5 passes behind 4, 6 behind 3, 1 behind 8 and 2 behind 7, both times crossing C. All form close line up stage, as follows :

4	3	8	7	2	1	6	5
o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

All skip down to footlights in line on last eight beats.

ACT II

SCENE.—*Living-room in Mr. GIBBS' house. A wide fireplace with burning logs at centre back. Plain old-fashioned colonial mantel above it. Two colonial candlesticks on mantel. Door R. of fireplace and window L. opening on to country, snow-covered landscape backing. Window gauzed. Green paper shades and white muslin curtains at window. Door L. 2 E., leading to spare room. Door R. 2 E., to kitchen. Door R. 3 E., to dining-room. Old fashioned armchair each side of fireplace. Stool near chair, L. Melodeon up L. Table L. C., chairs R. and L. Small mirror on wall L. Rag carpet on floor. Occasional chairs, splint-bottomed. Red cloth on table. December evening. Snowing. At rise of curtain, in front of fireplace, CALEB is discovered sitting in big armchair asleep. Sleigh bells heard, party singing in sleigh going by house. Lights up.*

(*Enter MRS. GIBBS, L. 2 E. Takes stool from R. C.*)

MRS. GIBBS. (*goes up to hearth. Sees CALEB*) Now, pa, you hain't got on yer clean shirt yit.

CALEB. (*starting up. Yawning and stretching*) Wal, I'm goin' to ef ye'll gimme time.

MRS. GIBBS. (*looking out of window L. C.*) Company'll be here purty soon and I want to comb yer hair and put on yer stock fer yer. (*arranges chairs L.*)

CALEB. It'll be quite a spell 'fore they come. (*coming down C.*)

MRS. GIBBS. Now, pa, do put on yer best shoes.

CALEB. See here, Hanner, I'm goin' to grease these all up and I'll make 'em look just as good as new, when I get to that taller.

MRS. GIBBS. Ye don't look a day older'n Eb Todd. Not a day.

CALEB. That's so, Hanner. Ye think Samantha will be to the party, don't ye, eh?

MRS. GIBBS. Yes, I suppose she will. Wal, now, go and git on yer shirt. It's laid out with yer stock in the spare room. (*hustling him off* L. 2 E.)

CALEB. (*going* L.) All right, Hanner,—all right.

(*Exit, L. 2 E.*)

MRS. GIBBS. (*looking in glass* L.) Dear me, if I haven't forgot my breastpin. Takes all my time to see to the men folks.

(*Straightens cover on CALEB'S armchair while talking to*
LOUISA. *Enter* LOUISA, R. 3 E.—*stands in doorway,*
hanging on to latch, swinging one foot.)

LOUISA. Did ye want them emptins set off, Mrs. Gibbs?

MRS. GIBBS. Oh, yes, Lowizy. They didn't get all het, did they?

(*Ready—sleigh bells.*)

LOUISA. No. Guess not. Miss Mirandy's come over to help, and she wants to know if she'll 'tend to the doughnuts.

MRS. GIBBS. Yes, Lowizy, she kin. (*goes* C., *and takes chair, placing it against scene* R. C. *Enter* CALEB, L. 2 E., *shirt in hand, with stock, goes up to fireplace, shivering and shaking*) Pa Springer, why don't you change?

CALEB. (*warming shirt at fire*) That spare room's colder'n the north side of a gravestone in Jinoary.

MRS. GIBBS. You could have left the door open and let in a little heat.

CALEB. Wal, Charles is a-changin' in there, and he didn't want the door open with so many women folks around.

MRS. GIBBS. For the land's sake, is Charles there?

(*starts L.*) An' I fixed it all up for the girls to put their things in. It does seem — (*stopping and turning around L.*) Now, pa, will yer go and git on thet shirt? I sha'n't git yer hair combed at all.

CALEB. (*standing helplessly*) Wal, I dunno where to go. My room's chuck full of punkin pies set around on chairs and dishes all over the beury. (*jumps away from the fire holding back of leg as if burnt*)

MRS. GIBBS. That's so. Wal, you go into the dinin'-room — (*crosses to R. 3 E. Calls*) Lowizy, tell Mirandy to come in here, and you stop out of the dinin'-room for a spell till grandpa changes.

CALEB. (*CALEB'S shirt catches fire. Jerking shirt away from fire*) Jest ketched it in time.

MRS. GIBBS. Most burnt it up, didn't ye?

CALEB. Ye hain't seen nothin' o' my best galluses, hev ye? (*going R.*)

MRS. GIBBS. No, I hain't, but I'll look for 'em. Come now, pa, do hurry.

CALEB. (*at door, shivering*) It's awful cold in there.

(*Exit, R. C.*)

MRS. GIBBS. Land of the living! I must have that room fixed up agin for the girls.

(*Crosses to L. 2 E., and exits. Knocking at door up R. C.*)

(*Enter HATTIE and JOHN up R. C.*)

HATTIE. Come in. I always do when they don't hear me knock. (*going to fire*) My, ain't it cold? (*fussing with wrap*) Why don't you help me off with this? You don't act the least bit as though we'd been engaged.

JOHN. (*helping her*) I can't say that you do either.

HATTIE. Well, you see, when a girl is almost *born* engaged, when she's *brought up* engaged, when she gets to be a woman *engaged*, and when she hasn't all her life been anything else *but* engaged it gets to be an awful sameness. (*puts wrap on table*)

JOHN. (*warming his hands*) I noticed that, too.

HATTIE. (*coming back to armchair*) Of course you did. You're a sensible chap, that is, sometimes; all times, excepting when you're thinking of Miranda Huggins. Then you seem to get in the clouds.

JOHN. I could not talk to her while *our* engagement lasted.

HATTIE. (*sitting in chair R. of table*) I suppose not, but now that we have agreed to disagree, or rather we've agreed to disengage ourselves, I know you will be happier, for I know, and have known for a long time of your love for Miranda, and now that we are *not* going to be married, I like you ever so much better than I did before, and I am going to help you with Miranda.

JOHN. (*approaching HATTIE*) You will? You're a dear, good girl.

HATTIE. Yes, I know all about that—(*going to door at back R. C.*) but don't let that poor old horse freeze to death out there. Put him in the barn and hurry back. (JOHN *exits up R. C.* HATTIE *goes to door L. 2 E., and calls*) Mrs. Gibbs! Mrs. Gibbs! Mrs. Gibbs! (*goes R. C.* Enter MIRANDA, R. 2 E.) Why, Mirandy. (*kisses her, then pauses and looks*) Why, what's the matter?

MIRANDA. Nothing, Hattie—nothing. (*crossing L.*)

HATTIE. Yes, there is. Why, you look so worried. (*crosses C.*)

MIRANDA. Do I? I suppose I'm a little tired. I've been helping Mrs. Gibbs.

HATTIE. (*putting her arm around MIRANDA*) Guess who's here? (*pause*) John.

MIRANDA. (*calmly*) Oh, indeed. (*goes L. and up*)

HATTIE. (*aside*) Am I wrong? (*to MIRANDA*) Yes, he'll be back very soon.

MIRANDA. It is a long time since I saw John; only once since the training. (*coming down to R. of table*)

HATTIE. You see, he's been teaching over at Weed Center.

MIRANDA. Yes, I know.

HATTIE. (*goes R. and back again*) And he's been to Boston about his new invention, something or other

to make a threshing machine feed faster—oh, John's a genius. (*at C.*)

MIRANDA. Yes, he is very smart. (*crosses R.*)

HATTIE. (*L. C.*) Smart? Why, he's the smartest chap around these parts, and just as good as he is clever.

(*Enter MRS. GIBBS, L. 2 E.*)

MRS. GIBBS. Why, Hattie, how d'ye do? (*kisses her*)

HATTIE. Mrs. Gibbs—I ——

MRS. GIBBS. Come right in the spare room. So glad you come early. Got lots to tell you before the other girls get here. (*takes HATTIE'S wraps from large chair up L. and leads her off L. 2 E. as JOHN knocks at door. MIRANDA goes toward door and meets JOHN as he opens it then comes down L. with suppressed agitation*)

MIRANDA. (*opening door*) John! (*returns*)

JOHN. (*following her*) You didn't expect me here?

MIRANDA. Well, no, that is —— (*turns from him down C.*)

JOHN. It's a very cold night, but warm and cheery enough in here. I don't suppose I ought to have come, because I'm not in the Church, but Mrs. Gibbs invited me, and—well—I did, that's all.

MIRANDA (*crosses to R. C.*) Sit down by the fire. The others will be along now soon. (*starts R. 2 E.*)

JOHN. (*springing after her*) Mira!—you don't mind me calling you that, do you? It was the name I gave you when you were little. You remember I used to say Miranda was too big for you. Do you mind?

MIRANDA. No, John, I don't mind. (*starts to R. 2 E.*)

JOHN. Wait, don't go. It's so long since I had a chance to speak to you. Only once since the training.

MIRANDA. Yes, you've been away.

JOHN. I've been teaching over at Weed Center, and—there have been other reasons.

MIRANDA. I know there have been other reasons.

JOHN. Jim Pennel told me a while ago that Ben

Deane had been trying to poison you against me with some foolish story of Mary Barden.

MIRANDA. (*to him, very seriously*) Is it a foolish story, John?

JOHN. Why, Mira, can you ask me —

MIRANDA. It would be hard to believe it of you, John—whom I have trusted so much. (*changing tone*) But how about that friend of whom you spoke at the training, John—will he marry the girl he really loves?

JOHN. Yes. There can be no opposition he will not overcome—no sacrifice he will not make.

(MRS. GIBBS *calls* MIRANDA.)

MIRANDA (*trying to conceal her feelings*) I hope he'll be happy—very happy.

JOHN. Why, Mira, you will be the first to know of his happiness. You will be —

(MRS. GIBBS *calls again*.)

MIRANDA. I *must* go, John, I must — (*starts toward door*) I will tell Mrs. Gibbs you are here.

(*Exit, L. 2 E.*)

JOHN. She won't let me speak—she doesn't care for me. She was trying to spare me the humiliation of telling me so. Oh, how blind I've been.

(*Enter* MRS. GIBBS, L. 2 E. *Meets* JOHN.)

MRS. GIBBS. Why, John, I am glad to see you. Afraid you wouldn't git here at all. (*cordial greeting, shaking hands, etc.*)

JOHN. It was so kind of you to ask me to come.

MRS. GIBBS. (*shaking hands*) 'Twan't kind a bit. 'Twas 'cause I wanted you. Land sakes, I'm just beat out and must sit down a minute. (*sits L. of table L.*)

JOHN. I was just thinking it would have been better not to have come to-night.

MRS. GIBBS. Why not?

JOHN. (*sitting in chair R. of table*) Well, you see —

MRS. GIBBS. You're the son of the Methodist preacher. Wal, I'm a Baptist dyed in the wool, and I'm the wife of the minister, and I ain't goin' to bring no discredit on my persition if I can help it. But I kinder think there ain't any separate heaven for Baptists and Methodists, an' we might jest as well be gettin' used to each other right here.

JOHN. True, but that's not all.

MRS. GIBBS. Wal, what is it, John? You used to tell me things. You don't seem to any more. Time back I thought you set considerable store by Mirandy, but I suppose I was wrong, 'cause every one say she's engaged to Ben Deane.

JOHN. (*anxiously*) Do you think it's true?

MRS. GIBBS. (*lays her hand on his*) I hope, John, thet ain't troublin' you, 'cause her father's awful sot, and he's bent on this match. It's a pity he sets so much by money an' temporal things. He's got purty high notions for M'randy.

JOHN. There's nothin' between Miranda and me. (*rises, goes up R.*)

MRS. GIBBS. (*surprised*) There ain't? (*rising and going L. C.*)

JOHN. (*returning*) Why, no! If she's made up her mind to marry Ben Deane, it's plain enough she doesn't care for me. If I thought she did I'd have her, if her father and the whole town came between us.

MRS. GIBBS. John, that ain't accordin' to yer Bible teachin', and the duty ye owe yer elders, but I reckon it's human nature.

JOHN. Yes, and I guess I'm about as human as any fellow in Bridgewater. As it is, I shall forget.

MRS. GIBBS. Then you *did* care for her?

JOHN. Did I say so? Young people have fancies; sometimes they don't last.

MRS. GIBBS. John, I must say you s'prise me. I was thinkin'—wal there, old married folks like me don't always know as much as they callate they do. If you can forgit —

JOHN. Oh, yes, I *shall*. But let me run out and set

that gate open for you. I thought I heard some one.
(*going up to door*)

MRS. GIBBS. John —

JOHN. (*comes to her*) There now, Mrs. Gibbs, you'd have people too happy in this world. They'd want to live right on here forever. There'd be no disciplining or getting ready for the next.

MRS. GIBBS. John, what are you talkin' about?

JOHN. You. I don't know anything better to talk about. (*runs out door R. C.*)

MRS. GIBBS. He ain't contented, though. I ken see it 'cause I love him like he was my own son and my heart is a-y'arnin' after him, an' a-achin' to see him happy. His own mother's no support, one of them limpsey sort thet's allus wantin' to be held up by other folks. (*sadly*) If he'd only been my son, but the good Lord never sent me a son. (*L. C., dashes away a tear.*
Enter CALEB, R. 3 E., dressed but carrying his stock in his hand) Pa, come here quick. Now give me your stock. (*takes stock*)

CALEB. Now you've got thet upside down. I'll hev to stand on my head to wear it thet way.

MRS. GIBBS. (*ad lib., if stock is not tied at end of dialogue. When stock tied*) Say, pa, Eb Todd hasn't got anybody to tie his stock for him.

CALEB. Thet's so, Hanner, thet's so. (*ready sleigh bells*) Let me look in that looking-glass.

MRS. GIBBS. No, no, you sit down there and let me fix your hair. (*sets him in chair, he bumps his elbow, she goes to glass and returns with brush*)

CALEB. Now, ye bumped my crazy bone. Now, Hanner, my hair —

MRS. GIBBS. Your hair is as full of snarls as the life of a politician.

CALEB. You're pulling every spear of it out. (*putting tallow on boots*)

MRS. GIBBS. Now, be gettin' off your boots while I get the others.

(*Exit, L. 2 E.*)

(Sleigh bells outside.)

CALEB. I'm dreffel afraid them thin shoes'll give me rheumatiz. Wal, ef I must, I must—— *(pulls off boots)* It's goin' a leetle too far when a man can't wear boots at a donation party. There they be! *(throws down boots)*

(Enter MRS. GIBBS, L. 2 E., with Congress gaiters.)

MRS. GIBBS. Now, pa, do hurry. *(takes boots and exits L. 2 E.)*

CALEB. Wal, I am hurryin' just as fast as I can. *(noise of people outside. "Whoa there." Sleigh bells, laughing, etc. Knock at door)* Christopher Kewlumbus! They're comin'. *(with one shoe half on)* Han-ner, they're comin'.

(Enter MRS. GIBBS, with galluses, L. 2 E.)

MRS. GIBBS. Pa, here's yer galluses. *(CALEB stumping up R., with one shoe half on and carrying the other, taking galluses from MRS. GIBBS as he goes. Exit, R. 3 E. MRS. GIBBS closes door after him and opens door R. C., returning C. Women come first, SAMANTHA, carrying bundles, followed by TONER, bandanna tied over his hat, bag under his arm. Two men with ham and bacon. JIM with sack. EBEN. with turkey. TOM with a live pig)* Why, howdy do, Miss Toner, Miss Blake, Miss Bean? Real glad to see you.

ALL THE WOMEN. Howdy do, howdy do.

LETITIA. Snowin' real hard.

MRS. GIBBS. Ladies, go right in the spare room and take off your things. *(pointing L. 2 E. Women go off L. 2 E.; men R. 2 E.)* Gentlemen, you go in the kitchen. *(pointing to R. 2 E. Enter HUGGINS, R. C.)* Howdy do, Mr. Huggins? Hope yer well.

HUGGINS. Purty fair, Mis' Gibbs, and wishin' you the same. How's the elder?

MRS. GIBBS. Real smart, thank ye. *(HUGGINS exits R. 2 E. Enter DEANE and SAMANTHA, up R. C. DEANE follows HUGGINS off R. 2 E.)* Samanthy, go right in the

spare room. (MRS. GIBBS *takes off apron and lays it over chair* L. U., *coming back to meet* MR. GIBBS, C. *Exit* SAMANTHA, L. 2 E. *Enter* MR. GIBBS, L. 2 E.) Wal, Charles, I'm glad you've come. (*gives a touch to his necktie, brushes a speck off his coat and looks him over*) Now, don't let them men get into polyticks. Some one's sure to get het up.

(*Men on entrance remain* R. MR. GIBBS *receives them.*)

(*Enter* HUGGINS and DEANE, R. 2 E.)

MR. GIBBS. I'll do the best I can. (*meeting the men*) How do you do, Mr. Huggins? Glad to see you. (*enter* TONER and TOM, R. 2 E.) And Mr. Deane and Mr. Toner. (*shakes hands all around. TOM leaves the group of men and goes up to fire, warming his hands and rubbing his ears*)

HUGGINS. (*to* MR. GIBBS) Hope I see you well?

MR. GIBBS. Quite well.

(*Enter girls, L. 2 E., except* SAMANTHA. *At the same time* JIM, *the other two men and* EBEN. *enter* R. 2 E. *Girls bring on slippers not wrapped, but concealed. LETITIA brings* SAMANTHA'S *with her own and hides them with hers and* HATTIE'S *under table cover. As* TOM *goes up C. he encounters* TONER, *circles around him and bumps into* EBEN. *Then he stands warming himself at fire.*)

HUGGINS. Hain't seen ye since I got back from Concord.

MR. GIBBS. I believe not.

HUGGINS. Whigs is feeling purty streaked over the 'lection.

MR. GIBBS. I suppose so.

EBEN. (*to* HUGGINS) Did you see Mr. Pierce?

HUGGINS. No, called twice but he wasn't in. Ought to writ him I was comin'. Thet's what I ought to 'a' done.

(*Group of men* R. *turn slightly up stage.*)

(Enter LOUISA, R. 2 E., with large tin pail, rushing toward L. 2 E.)

MRS. GIBBS. (coming down L.) Lowizy, what are you doin' with the pail?

LOUISA. (speaking rapidly) Mis' Sloper's bag broke open and there's more'n peck o' white beans in the spare room bed.

MRS. GIBBS. Land o' the livin', shake up the feathers good when you get through. (turns to women and talks)

LOUISA. Yes'm. (starts quickly toward L. 2 E., when TOM suddenly gets before her and falls down, causing her to fall over him, making a great clatter with the pail. HUGGINS is talking so excitedly he doesn't notice the fracas, and LOUISA, being on top, improves the opportunity to give TOM a good cuffing and pounding. Girls laughing, MRS. GIBBS protesting) There, I can't help it if I am in the preacher's house; I allus said you'd get it yet. (goes quickly to L. 2 E. TOM after her. She runs off, partly shutting the door and sticking her head through the opening) Can't come in here. Ain't no men nor boys 'lowed in. (shuts door in his face)

TOM. Ain't, eh? Wal, I'm coming bald-headed.

(TOM picks up a pillow from chair near door, pulls door open and dives his head in first, flies into the face of SAMANTHA, who is coming out, and almost knocks her down. She gives a little scream, then seeing it is TOM, seizes him by the ear, walks him down to R. 2 E., where there is a chair, and sets him down hard. MRS. GIBBS closes door L. 2 E., and picks up pillow.)

SAMANTHA. There, Thomas Jefferson Huggins, if you're heard from again for the next hour, you'll go home quicker than scat.

EBEN. Feelin' kinder raspy, ain't ye, Samantha?

SAMANTHA. Wal! (goes over and sits in chair R. of table. MRS. GIBBS sits in chair L. of table. Men down R. again)

MRS. GIBBS. My! Samantha, that boy's a trial, isn't he?

(JOHN enters from outside up R. C., and exits R. 2 E., slapping TOM on the head as he passes him.)

(CALEB enters R. C. MR. GIBBS goes up C.)

HUGGINS. (*excitedly*) I say Bridgewater's got to be considered. Yes, sir. It's got to be considered.

SAMANTHA. (*looking at the men*) Land o' the livin'! Are them men at it again?

MRS. GIBBS. Yes. If I only knew how to stop 'em!

SAMANTHA. (*with decision*) Callate I know. (*advancing toward men*)

HUGGINS. An' I say it agin, the Constitution —

SAMANTHA. Seth Huggins, is this a corks meetin' or is it a donation party to the minister's? There's some ladies here that would like to speak a word to Elder Gibbs, if you can let up on the Constitution for a spell.

HUGGINS. (*meekly*) Why, certainly, Samanthy, allus give way to the ladies; why, certainly; don't we, gentlemen?

MEN. (*all in chorus*) Why, certainly.

(MEN all subside quietly into chairs except MR. GIBBS, who remains standing. HUGGINS sits down R. 1 E.)

SAMANTHA. Mr. Gibbs, the ladies hez each some little remembrance made special for yer. Here's mine. (*takes slippers from LETITIA. Gives them to MR. GIBBS*)

MR. GIBBS. (C., *graciously*) Thank you, Miss Huggins. Your own work, I suppose? (SAMANTHA nods) I shall wear them with pleasure.

(SAMANTHA goes down L. to MRS. GIBBS and MIRANDA.)

HUGGINS. (*to EBEN.*) She got them down to the store and ain't paid for them nuther.

(HATTIE presents a pair of slippers.)

MR. GIBBS. Ah, Miss Burley, how thoughtful ! Now I shall have two pairs. (*Enter JOHN R. 2 E., goes up C. and is met by HATTIE. LETITIA presents a pair*) Really, I'm going to be well shod at any rate. (*LETITIA goes over to SAMANTHA L. The other girls go back up L. Another pair*) Thank you, Miss Blake, so kind. (*another pair*) Really, I'm overwhelmed. (*another pair*)

EBEN. Kind of a slippery day.

(*TOM laughs loudly. HUGGINS slaps ears and goes up R.*)

MR. GIBBS. Very good, I'm sure. (*another pair*) Ah !

(*Gasping. TOM laughs during slipper bus. TOM commences to laugh after the third pair. HUGGINS rises, pinches his ear and he goes up into the corner and sulks. After the last pair, MRS. GIBBS and MIRANDA unload him. MIRANDA crosses and closes door R. 2 E.*)

LETITIA. (*to SAMANTHA*) Wal, I declare, Elder Gibbs seems quite overcome with that expression o' feelin' on our part.

SAMANTHA. So he does. The good man is so easily teched.

TOM. (*disgustedly. Down R. to MIRANDA, who is standing near him*) He ain't teched neither. He's mad clean down to his heels.

MIRANDA. (*in dismay*) Tom, hush ! What an awful boy you are.

TOM. Wal, wouldn't you be mad if you was him ? How would you like to be took for a thousand legged worm ? If it 'ud be me, I'd up and throw them slippers at 'em all ker swash.

... (*SAMANTHA makes signs to TOM across stage.*)

MIRANDA. Oh, Tom, do please keep still. Aunt Samantha's looking this way, and you'll get sent home sure's you're alive.

TOM. Get me a doughnut—I'll be quiet.

(MIRANDA goes off and returns with doughnut which she gives to TOM. He sits down R. C., and eats during HUGGINS' speech.)

HUGGINS. (*with importance. Approaching MR. GIBBS and clearing his throat loudly*) Mr. Gibbs, the trustees of the Bridgewater Baptist Church an' the deacons of the same hev constituted me their representative an'—(*hesitates for a word. Finds it on cuff*) ambassador to herewith present you with a substantial token of their support an' recognition. Hopin' that yer ardor may increase an' multiply, especially your visits to the sick, indigent and unconverted, I herewith present you with said token of our esteem and valuation. (*hands envelope with wax seal to MR. GIBBS and returns to place*) An' may the Lord go on abundantly blessin' your labors among us.

EBEN. Amen !

MR. GIBBS. (*taking packet*) Mr. Huggins, brethren and sisters, I thank you most sincerely for this kind expression of your good will.

EBEN. Amen again.

(MR. GIBBS turns away, opens paper and people talk in groups.)

MRS. GIBBS. (*coming up to MR. GIBBS*) How much, Charles ?

MR. GIBBS. (C., *disappointedly*) Only forty dollars—to last till spring. And I did want you to have that shawl, Hannah.

MRS. GIBBS. (C., *cheerfully*) Never mind, Charles : I don't want it no more'n a cat wants two tails. I'm goin' to dye over the old one and it'll look just as good as new. It'll be warmer'n a new one, too, 'cause dyein' allus thickens 'em up drefful.

(JOHN overhears MR. GIBBS, and taking a bank-note from his pocket, hands it to MIRANDA as she comes up.)

JOHN. Don't say anything. Just give it to Mrs. Gibbs without telling, will you?

MIRANDA. (*taking it*) Yes.

(JOHN *returns to HATTIE.*)

MRS. GIBBS. Come, now, let's have some singin'. Come, M'randy, come all on ye. Come, Eb, don't you sing?

EBEN. Wal, I used to, then tunes come in fashion an' I quit.

(*They all gather round melodeon. While they are doing so MIRANDA places the money in MRS. GIBBS' hand.*)

MIRANDA. From a friend. I wasn't to tell.

MRS. GIBBS. Now, look here, M'randy —

MIRANDA. No, it isn't me. Honest.

MRS. GIBBS. What'll we sing?

MIRANDA. Let Polly Blake sing "Nettie Moore."

MRS. GIBBS. Miss Blake, won't you sing "Nettie Moore" for us? (*organ prelude*) Sit down, Eb; Miss Blake is goin' to sing "Nettie Moore." (*they sing "Nettie Moore"*) Wal, now let's have "Peter, Peter."

(*All sing.*)

SAMANTHA. Now, girls, bring in the refreshments. Boys, you must help.

(*All go off R. 2 E. except SAMANTHA, HUGGINS, CALEB and DEANE. CALEB sits again, dreamily watching the fire up C. DEANE and HUGGINS pause to speak. One of the men arranges the chairs R. for the following business as he goes off.*)

EBEN. (*looking off R. 2 E.*) Guess I ain't wanted amongst that flock of hens. I'll go and attend to the turkey.

(*Exit, R. 2 E.*)

HUGGINS. Wal, Ben, ye seem to be gettin' on with M'randy. Ain't losin' any time.

DEANE. Don't calculate to.

(*Exit, R. 2 E.*)

HUGGINS. Good, straightforward, honest boy; I like him.

(*TOM comes back first with a piece of pie and glass of lemonade on a plate, sits down R. 1 E. EBEN. follows with the same and sits next to him. As he drinks TOM slips his pie away, and when EBEN. misses it, TOM holds it out of sight with his right hand, eating the other piece out of his left and looking very innocent. LETITIA, JOHN, HATTIE and TONER enter with one table, taking it up R., followed by JIM, with pail of lemonade, and four girls with another table. MRS. GIBBS with pot of coffee. CALEB comes over to table with bandanna under his chin.*)

CALEB. Don't see any beans. More nourishment in beans than there is in steak. (*Sees plate of pie in SAMANTHA'S hands*) Mince pies—hope they didn't put enny sperit in 'em, Hannah; we ought to be law-abidin' folks.

MRS. GIBBS. No, pa, there ain't anything stronger than cider in 'em. Sit down and let me give you suthin'.

(*CALEB returns to armchair. MIRANDA goes over and sits R. of door L. 2 E. DEANE brings her refreshments and stands by her until LOUISA'S song is finished. LOUISA enters L. 2 E., and sits down L. 1 E. HATTIE and JOHN go over to table L., with refreshments, she sitting R., and JOHN back. HUGGINS sits next to CALEB down stage side. MR. GIBBS R. of mantelpiece. All the girls except one, who remains down R., cross to L. U. E., with refreshments. One of the girls takes something over to LOUISA. One man follows them, the other sits up R. MRS. GIBBS takes plate with lemonade, etc., to CALEB. Also to HUGGINS, then fills cup with coffee, offers it around and gives it to JOHN. TONER up L., getting refresh-*

ments for himself and LETITIA. All this business goes on during the following speeches, etc.)

SAMANTHA. (*to EBEN.*) Now, do hev some more of thet pie.

EBEN. (*taking a piece*) Dunno but I will. (*speaking to her over his shoulder*) Young folks seem to be enjoying it, too. (*turns back in time to see TOM in an effort to steal his pie*)

SAMANTHA. (*sitting next to EBEN.*) Yes, they be. It makes me think of them verses :

“ Gay hopes is theren, by fancy led,
Least pleasin' when possessed,
The tear forgot as soon as shed,
The sunshine o' the breast.”

I allus thought them lines wuz real affectin'.

EBEN. So they be, Miss Samanthy, so they be. Them are verses that strike home to a lone bachelor like me. Did it ever come to you how lonesome a bachelor might be ?

SAMANTHA. I dunno's it ever did, Mr. Todd ; dunno's it ever did. (*while EBEN. is listening to SAMANTHA, TOM steals pie. He sees his plate empty, gets up and goes again to table R. TOM eats voraciously from the three pieces at once. SAMANTHA rising*) Land, look at that boy ! (*goes around and knocks TOM in the back, jerking pie out of his mouth*) Thomas, do you want to kill yourself ? Lay down thet pie this minit. (*taking plate away from him*) Hev ye forgot what ye learned in Sabbath-school about the Prodigal Son and riotous livin' ? Don't you touch another thing. I don't callate to be up all night with you ef I kin help it. (*puts plate on table and offers another plate of refreshments to MR. GIBBS up L., which he takes. MR. GIBBS sees TOM pouting down R., comforts him and gives him another piece of pie*)

EBEN. Miss Samanthy ! (*another attempt to steal pie*) Another doughnut, please.

MRS. GIBBS. Lowizy, won't you sing that song you sung for us down to the quiltin' ?

LOUISA. No, ma'am, I don't want to.

MRS. GIBBS. Mr. Huggins, you ask her.

HUGGINS. (*coming c., and calling LOUISA, who goes c. 'to him'*) Don't tell any one, because they'd all be down there, but if you'll sing that song you sung for them down to the quiltin' I'll give you one of them long sticks of red and white candy that ye like so much, next time ye come down to the store.

LOUISA. (*c., pleased*) Will you? All right; I'll sing it for you.

TOM. (*coming c.*) No, don't let her sing. I want to do a step.

HUGGINS. I'll step on you if you don't set down.

(*TOM sits down precipitately. LOUISA makes a triumphant face at him, which he returns. She then makes an old-fashioned bow to the audience drawing right foot back, and commences her song. After song EBEN. is holding SAMANTHA's hand tenderly.*)

SAMANTHA. Wal, now, it's half-past nine and I think it's about time to go home.

(*Women go off L. 2 E., and men R. 2 E.*)

HUGGINS. Yes, so do I, Samanthy, after thet —
(*points to the two holding hands*)

SAMANTHA. (*assuming dignity*) Seth Huggins, ye want to recollect some one's got to set an example 'fore Thomas and Mirandy. (*to MRS. GIBBS.*) Hope you won't all git beat out clearin' up.

MRS. GIBBS. Oh, I guess not.

(*Exit SAMANTHA L. 2 E. Other women come out L. 2 E., with wraps on, saying good-night to MRS. GIBBS. The men come out R. 2 E., and shake hands with her and exit with the women up R. C. MR. GIBBS puts on his hat and goes off with the last men.*)

CALEB. Now, Hannah, let me help ye a little.

MRS. GIBBS. Pa, you set right down. You've been under my feet all evenin'.

(Women all on and off up R. C.)

TONER. *(coming on from R. 2 E.)* Good-night, Mrs. Gibbs; hev ye seen Letishy?

MRS. GIBBS. She's jest gone out.

TONER. Cracky! Letishy! etc.

(Exit up R. C.)

(Enter EBEN. from R. 2 E.)

EBEN. Good-night, Mrs. Gibbs.

MRS. GIBBS. Good-night, Eb. Hope you hed a good time.

EBEN. Yes, had a delicious time. I'll come again *(CALEB looks disgusted)*, and bring my bed. *(moves up stage a little and waits)*

MRS. GIBBS. Eb, was you waiting for some one?

EBEN. Wal, I jest thought I'd sort o' stay around till Miss Samanthy got on her mantilly.

MRS. GIBBS. Well, here she comes now.

(Enter SAMANTHA, L. 2 E.)

SAMANTHA. Guess I'm about the last one to go. Good-night, Mrs. Gibbs.

MRS. GIBBS. Good-night; hope ye hed a good time.

SAMANTHA. Oh, yes, had a fine time.

(SAMANTHA and CALEB talk.)

EBEN. *(interrupting SAMANTHA and CALEB)* Miss Samanthy, I s'pose I couldn't see you home, could I?

(CALEB plucks at SAMANTHA's wrap.)

SAMANTHA. I s'pose you could.

(Exit together R. C., EBEN. giving CALEB a triumphant punch in the ribs as he goes off. TOM comes on R. 2 E., blowing string from his cap out of his eyes, LOUISA L. 2 E., yawning and rubbing her eyes. They bump together C., then quarrel, strike at each other C., MRS. GIBBS protesting. LOUISA bawls as she goes off, and TOM follows pointing his finger at her.)

TOM. Cry baby, cry baby! (*steals pie from table and exit quickly up R. C.* MRS. GIBBS follows TOM to door with exclamations, "Thomas Huggins," etc. Coming down to CALEB)

MRS. GIBBS. What an awful boy!

CALEB. Oh, he's a terrible critter.

(MRS. GIBBS takes apron from chair L. U. E. and candle from organ.)

MRS. GIBBS. Come, pa, it's time to go to bed.

CALEB. Wal, I don't see why I got all dressed up. Nobody noticed me.

MRS. GIBBS. Did, too. I saw Samantha look at you. (*during these speeches MIRANDA enters from L. 2 E. and puts cape on table*) Miranda, your father'll be along pretty soon now. Come, pa.

(CALEB yawns and stretches and exits with MRS. GIBBS, R. 3 E.)

MIRANDA. I wonder if father's getting up the sleigh. I want to get away to be alone. (*she goes up to window and looks out*) John with Hattie! Oh, how happy they look. She loves him and he loves her. I ought to be glad they're happy. (*weeps—hears sound outside. Looks out*) Why, he's coming back. He shall not see tears in my eyes. He might think I cared. I would die before that. (*brushes away tears and pretends to be arranging furniture as JOHN enters R. C.*)

JOHN. Mira, I thought I should never get a word alone with you. I am determined and must speak now.

MIRANDA. Not now, John. I know what you're going to say and I can't hear you. I—I am very glad and I am very happy—oh, yes, very happy.

JOHN. You are sure you are very happy?

MIRANDA. Yes, why not? Hattie is waiting for you—you shouldn't keep her out there—good-night, John—good-night.

(JOHN goes toward door R. C.; when near door he stops and looks back. MIRANDA has turned away and her eyes fill with tears.)

(*Enter HUGGINS, R. C.*)

HUGGINS. (*coming down*) Come, M'randy; get on yer things. The sleigh's here. (*seeing her face*) Why, what's the matter? Yer cryin'?

(*JOHN who was about to exit pauses at this and turns*)

MIRANDA. Oh, no, father, no.

HUGGINS. Yes ye be, Mirandy. Something *is* the matter. Ye never lied to me in yer life; ye never deceived me; don't begin now. (*turns and sees JOHN*) It's you, that's it. (*starts toward JOHN*) It's you!

MIRANDA. (*quickly*) No, no, father. It's not John. He—he's nothing to me. (*takes up her wrap and begins putting it on with nervous, trembling hands*)

JOHN. (*sadly—aside*) Nothing—nothing.

(*Exit, R. C.*)

HUGGINS. Come, Mirandy.

MIRANDA. Yes, father. (*suddenly staggers against chair, partly sinking into it*)

HUGGINS. Why, Mirandy, yer ain't goin' to faint?

MIRANDA. I'm not feelin' well—I — (*struggles to her feet*)

HUGGINS. (*taking the hood from her and gently putting it on her head*) That's so. Yer all tired out, ain't ye? Come home, Mirandy—come home. (*puts arm around her, supporting and almost carrying her up* R. C. *Sound of sleigh bells and singing outside as the others drive off*)

SLOW CURTAIN

(*Business for "Peter Peter"*)

(*All seated except DEANE who is leaning over MIRANDA'S shoulder* R. C. *and the singers around organ* L. U. E.

EBEN. *stands down* R. I. E. *for a few measures, beating time, then sits down next to SANANTHA, and TONER, after looking sheepishly around to see*

if any one is looking, sits down on half of LETITIA'S chair L. 1 E., which she has been coquettishly offering him. They keep up a half-pleased, half-embarrassed by-play. At the proposition to sing, TOM goes off R. 2 E. and brings on a jumping-jack and some long straws and sits down just back and L. of SAMANTHA. As the music starts up TOM jerks his jumping-jack. SAMANTHA turns around, sees it, takes it away from him, reproves him, and puts the toy on her chair. Before she is seated again, however, TOM slips it out and jerks it again. She again sees it, takes it away, scolds TOM and stands him up in the corner. Takes the jumping-jack off R. 2 E., returns, sits down again and becomes absorbed in conversation with EBEN. TOM takes straw and tickles her left cheek. She scratches it. He tickles it again; she brushes it and looks around. TOM whips around to EBEN. and repeats the business on his right cheek. He looks around and TOM returns to SAMANTHA, who sees him, snatches the straw away and both she and EBEN. get him in the corner again and pummel him. This business should be planned to fill in the entire "Peter Peter."

(Business for "Nettie Moore")

(All sit down as before, remaining quiet until the chorus begins, the two couples R. and L. looking very contented and sentimental. As chorus commences, EBEN. goes around back between SAMANTHA and TOM and whispers in SAMANTHA'S ear. TOM cranes around and listens. EBEN. sees him, gives him a look and he retires. Then he takes the straw again and tickles DEANE who is leaning over MIRANDA. As DEANE looks around, TOM looks in the same direction and goes back to SAMANTHA and EBEN., who is still whispering in her ear, and blows a horn in their ears at the conclusion of song. Meanwhile during chorus TONER reaches his right hand under his left arm and gets hold of LETITIA'S left. She tries to withdraw it; they quar-

rel, sit back to back, push and TONER goes on to floor at the conclusion of chorus. TOM goes off R. 2 E. and gets the pig, lets it loose on the stage just as the song is finished. Consternation of the ladies, while TOM chases and recaptures pig, carrying it off R. 2 E.)

ACT III

SCENE.—*The farmyard of HUGGINS. Entrance to house with vine-covered porch L. 2 E. Drop at back showing barn and country landscape. Similar drops at sides meeting at corners, making panorama effect. Barn with door R. 2 E. Fence with gate from barn to R. U. E. Threshing machine R. C. Old-fashioned well with sweep L. Tree in front of it and bench under tree. Apples on tree. Cup hanging against well. Chicken coop against fence R. Straw stack R. U. E. Time, midsummer.*

DISCOVERED: JOHN feeding machine L. C. with back to audience. Man helping him on the other side. TOM leading horse round windlass R. C. TONER on top of stack R. U. E. pitching straw down to JOHN. JIM R. U. E. pitching straw up to TONER. DEANE coming on R. C. Girl with bundle crossing stage from R. to L. 2 E. Other girls feeding chickens up R. Machine going. After curtain is up LOUISA enters L. 2 E., blows dinner-horn and goes up around back of stack to R. U. E. All stop work and start for the house. TOM and man take horse off R. 2 E., man returning immediately and entering L. 2 E. with the others.

TONER. (*coming down from stack*) I tell ye, John, your feeder's a buster.

JOHN. Works well, doesn't it?

TONER. Wal, I shud say.

(*Exit, L. 2 E.*)

DEANE. (*C., sneeringly*) S'pose you hope to get rich out of your invention?

JOHN. Yes, if hard work will do it. Some folks have easier ways of getting money. I haven't yet learned to get mine by lying and cheating.

(*Bus. of DEANE interrupted by entrance of SAMANTHA, L. 2 E.*)

SAMANTHA. Come, boys, dinner's ready.

(*Exit, L. 2 E. Exeunt JOHN and DEANE, L. 2 E. LOUISA comes down L. Enter TOM, R. 2 E., whistling and skipping across stage to LOUISA.*)

LOUISA. What you goin' in fer?

TOM. Grub.

LOUISA. (L. C.) Wal, you needn't. You've got to wait.

TOM. Who said so?

LOUISA. Yer Aunt Samantha.

TOM. Gee-whilliken!

LOUISA. Oh, my! I'll tell yer father you swore.

TOM. I didn't. That ain't swearin'.

LOUISA. Oh, won't you git it!

TOM. Look here. You jest go tattlin' and I'll show you.

(*Makes a dive at LOUISA; she runs around back of windlass down front and up under slide R. U. E., where she stumbles and TOM covers her with straw, she protesting, "I'll tell Aunt Samantha," etc., TOM imitating her. He climbs up ladder back of stack and slides down into straw R. U. E. and starts down C. as SAMANTHA calls off. LOUISA comes around stack to R. C.*)

SAMANTHA. (*off L. 2 E.*) Lowizy! Lowizy!

TOM. Sh! Here's Aunt Samantha coming back. (*running over to tree and climbing up*) Don't tell her where I am.

(*LOUISA picks up horn L. C. and runs back around stack.*)

SAMANTHA. (*entering with pail, L. 2 E.*) Lowizy, where be ye? You come here now and get a pail of water. If it ain't enough. (*looking off L. while LOUISA sneaks around L. and exits behind porch L. 2 E.*) Lowizy, you come in the house this minute, and help wait on table.

(*Enter EBEN., R. 3 E.*)

EBEN. (*up R. C. slightly*) Howdy-do, Miss Huggins?

SAMANTHA. (*rather shortly*) Howdy-do.

EBEN. (*advances slightly*) I wouldn't 'a' come jist when Mr. Huggins wuz so busy thrashin', but ye see they want to see 'bout paintin' the blinds to the meetin' house. Some wants 'em a light green, an' others want 'em dark, an' I knew they'd hev ter be jist as Mr. Huggins sed, so I come.

SAMANTHA. Yes, Seth is ruther put to it fer time. But ye had to ask him, cert'nly. (EBEN. *takes pail from SAMANTHA, puts it down by well*) Is that what ye wanted me fer?

EBEN. (*embarrassed*) Wal, no—leastwise 'twan't all—I wanted ter sorter — (*takes hold of her hand in a diffident manner. TOM drops an apple on his head. He jumps violently*) Windfall, by gosh!

SAMANTHA. Now, if that ain't too bad for them apples ter fall off like that 'fore they're ripe. The blight's got into them, sure 'nuff. Wal, 'tain't best ter put our hopes on ennything earthly. It makes me think o' them words:

“So quick our transient comforts fly;
An' pleasures only bloom to die.”

EBEN. Thet's so, Miss Samanthy; but ez I wuz goin' to say——

SAMANTHA. Doesn't seem's if I ought ter stay out here a-gassin'. The thrashers are all in to dinner, and it takes a sight of work ter feed thrashers.

EBEN. Wal, ain't there M'randy, an' Lowizy an' two or three others?

SAMANTHA. Oh, yes, they're there. M'randy's spry, to be sure, an' a real likely girl, but that Lowizy—*(shakes head despairingly)* she's thet shiftless, I'm allus thinkin' o' that verse:

“'Tis the voice of the sluggard,
I hear him complain,
'You hev roused me too soon,
I must slumber again.'”

EBEN. Miss Samanthy, you hadn't orter let things weigh on yer that way. You're too much of a caretaker. I'm 'mazin' 'fraid you're wearin' yerself into the ground. Set down a spell, can't ye? *(she hesitates)* Oh, come on, do.

(SAMANTHA sits down on bench. EBEN. beside her at a respectful distance.)

SAMANTHA. *(trying to appear resigned)* I've allus been havin' 'nuff ter kerry. Now, there's Thomas; he's an awful responsibility, an' sometimes I think I ain't meek 'nuff under the cross. *(TOM lets down a big bug tied to a string, and dangles it in her face. Drawing it up quickly)* Oh—— *(jumps up screaming. Bench on end of which EBEN. is sitting turns over, throwing him to stage. He scrambles to get up—gets up—looks very sheepish and says)*

EBEN. Kind of a kerflummix, weren't it?

SAMANTHA. Never could trust that pesky bench.

EBEN. Well, I guess I won't trust that end of it again.

(They sit together center of bench, looking loverlike and bashful.)

SAMANTHA. Oh, yes, Thomas is a drefful responsibility. I dunno what would become of him if he didn't hev me ter look after him. I'm beginnin' to feel, though, thet my labors is bearin' fruit. *(TOM drops an apple on her head)* Mercy on me! There *is* suthin' the matter with thet tree.

EBEN. (*making an effort—edging toward SAMANTHA*) Miss Huggins—Samanthy—do ye feel thet ye could bear up under another responsibility—could ye—(*edging a little nearer*) do ye think ——

(TOM *worries* EBEN. *with the bug during these speeches, but keeps it carefully out of their sight until he lets it down again.*)

SAMANTHA. Now, Mr. Todd, I hope ye haven't come ter ask me ter set up with enny more sick folks this week, 'cause I'm jest beat out with them thrashers an' the sewing circle an' the Sabbath-school picnic, an' ——

EBEN. No, no, Miss Huggins; ye don't understand—I mean—wal, it's suthin' purty serious. I've been a-tryin' to say ter ye fer some time—I mean—I mean ——

SAMANTHA. (*resignedly*) Go on, Mr. Todd. I hope I'm willin' to trust, an' look to the right place for support. I hope I've allus showed I wuz willin' to take up whatever 'fiction the Lord saw fit to put on me.

“Why should this poor worm feel revolt
At burdens laid on me?”

EBEN. Miss Huggins, if ye could only look with the same meek confidin' speerit toward ——

SAMANTHA. (*very meekly*) Why shouldn't I, Mr. Todd? Why shouldn't I? (TOM *lets down bug*) Darn that plaguey bug.

EBEN. Miss Samanthu, do you think you could consider me in the light of a responsibility, ye know—in the light of one who wa'n't ennywise worthy of ye, do ye think ye could—(TOM *drops an apple very near his nose*) consider me ——

SAMANTHA. (*surprised*) Mr. Todd!

EBEN. Call me Ebenezer.

SAMANTHA. Ebenezer, this is a responsibility, no mistake. You've 'bout took my breath away. But there's Thomas ——

EBEN. Wal, now, Samanthu, won't ye ——

(TOM bears too heavily on the limb of the tree in his eagerness to listen, loses his balance, shower of apples and twigs come down, while TOM hangs on the limb, dangling between EBEN. and SAMANTHA.)

SAMANTHA. (*screaming, grabs the dangling legs*) Go on, Mr. Todd, go on.

EBEN. (*taking stage R.*) No, I'm darned if I will!

SAMANTHA. (*to TOM*) You come down, quick! (*very indignant. TOM drops and she seizes him by the collar*) So you was up there a-listenin' to every word in spite of what you've learned in Sabbath-school 'bout Lot's wife an' Ananias an' Sapphiry. You come right into the house this minit. (*walks TOM into the house L. 2 E.*)

EBEN. (*sitting disconsolately on bench at well R. C. Looking after her*) Gosh—I dunno whether she's willin' or not. Don't seem to be much further along'n I wuz last harvestin'. But I guess she's a-softenin' a little—seems that way—yes, she seems to be givin' in some. (*bus. of hat dropping down well. Enter HUGGINS and DEANE from house L. 2 E.*) Oh, Mr. Huggins. (*rising and going C. Bows to DEANE*) 'Bout them blinds to the meetin' house.

HUGGINS. (*C.*) You tell 'em to paint 'em a dark green; none o' them light frisky yellor greens thet orter belong on a play-actin' house instead o' the abidin'-place o' the righteous.

EBEN. (*going toward R. U. E.*) Thet's so, thet's so, Mr. Huggins. Ye want a nice sober bluish green—I know. Wal, I'll be a-movin'.

(*Exit up R., followed slightly by HUGGINS, who plucks a straw from the feeder, sits on windlass and picks his teeth.*)

DEANE. (*to L. C., to HUGGINS*) See you've got John Harper helpin'.

HUGGINS. Yes, John's a good hand; been inventin' a thing fer thrashing, ter feed faster. You can attach it to any machine. *He* thinks he's going to make lots o' money with it.

DEANE. Hm! 'Tain't likely. Does he hev much to say to M'randy? (*at bench L.*)

HUGGINS. Why, he's keepin' company with another girl.

DEANE. (*with meaning*) He ought to if he ain't.

HUGGINS. Do you think thet's so—you know what we wuz talkin' 'bout?

DEANE. I *know* it's so.

HUGGINS. (*shaking his head doubtfully*) I can't believe it. But ef I wuz sure on it, he should never step foot on this farm again. (*suddenly*) There—by Jupiter! —I forgot that tarnel pew door — (*calling off up R.*) Ebenezer—Ebenezer! (*runs to R.; when near entrance calls off*) Hold on there; be ye deaf?

(*Exit, hurriedly, R. U. E.*)

DEANE. (*taking stage near seat*) So, John Harper, you're trying to get into the good graces of the old man. Well, not if I know it. It won't be well for you to stand in my way. (*turns R. and sees MARY. Enter MARY, R. 2 E. She comes down carrying a bundle of sewing. She starts slightly on seeing DEANE*) Where are you going?

MARY. (R. C.) In there.

DEANE. (L. C.) Are you doing work for her?

MARY. Yes.

DEANE. (*anxiously*) Have you been there many times?

MARY. Well—suppose I have?

DEANE. What have you told her?

MARY. Nothin'. Did you ever hear anything I'd said?

DEANE. No, Mary—but —

MARY. Then why do you ask such questions? You once said you liked the honor I had about such things. Do you think I lost that when I lost everything else?

DEANE. (*half-ashamed*) No, no, I didn't say that. (*MARY starts toward house with bundle*) Wait; you don't want to go in there. The thrashers are all at

dinner. Leave the things with me. I'll give them to her.

MARY. (*turning back—half over her shoulder*) What are you afraid of?

DEANE. (*crosses c.*) Nothin'.

MARY. (*turns, puts bundle on bench*) Yes, you are; you don't want me to see Mirandy Huggins. (*comes to DEANE, then speaks*) Are you goin' to marry her after telling me you wasn't?

DEANE. Wal, you see, I must keep in with the old man for a time yet—till after the election.

MARY. That ain't answerin' me. Do you mean to marry her?

DEANE. (*impatiently*) Haven't I told you no?

MARY. Yes. (*turns away*)

DEANE. See here, Mary, you always wanted to live in the city. Suppose I take you down to Concord and get you a nice place where you won't have to slave at this — (*pointing to sewing*)

MARY. (*forgetting herself*) Oh, Ben, will you come, too?

DEANE. I couldn't just now—that is to stay. But I'll run down often to see you. Will you go?

MARY. No. You wouldn't come; you'd stay here and marry her.

DEANE. Now, look here; haven't I told you all I was doin' this for was to get what I want out o' the old man? Folks have begun to ask questions about ye. 'Twon't be long 'fore you'll want to leave. (*MARY looks at him sharply and turns up stage. Pause*) Ye'd better go now.

MARY. (*firmly*) No.

DEANE. Won't ye go when I tell ye I'm not goin' to marry her?

MARY. No.

DEANE. (*complete change of manner*) Mary, I never cared for any one but you, an' to prove I mean it—(*pause*) I'll marry ye to-morrow.

MARY. (*coming to him*) Ben — (*as she gets to him, he quickly passes to R. C.*)

DEANE. (*looking toward house*) Be careful. Some one might see. You take the two o'clock stage to South Hempstead, and I'll run over to Weed Center and catch it there. We mustn't be seen to leave together. I'll be with you in Concord to-morrow night. Will you go?

MARY. Yes, yes.

DEANE. (*writing in note-book*) Here is the address. I always meant to make things right when I could. You know that.

MARY. Yes, Ben, yes.

DEANE. Here is money for the journey. Remember, the two o'clock stage. There's no time to lose.

(*Enter JOHN from house L. 2 E. DEANE withdraws up R., watching JOHN and MARY—waiting for the letter—unnoticed by others. MARY takes up bundle again.*)

JOHN. Oh, Mary, I saw you from the window. Have you come from the house?

(*Enter TOM L. 2 E., takes apple from tree, feels of one and then another to see if they are ripe, walks quietly around stack, eating apple, climbs on top and hides in the hay. Enter MIRANDA from house L. 2 E. She sees JOHN and MARY and pauses and watches them. DEANE up stage R. watches them all.*)

MARY. Yes, and here is something for you. (*gives him a letter.*)

JOHN. (*taking letter*) Thank you; you're always thoughtful. (*crosses to R. C. Sits on windlass. Opens letter and reads. His face at last expresses surprise and pleasure.*)

MIRANDA. (L. C.) Oh, Mary, have you got them all done? Come in and let me give you some tea; you look so tired. (*takes bundle and puts it on seat*)

MARY. (*coming,—she desires to get to DEANE*) No, thank you—you're kind—but I—I can't. I've done the work the best I could—you'll remember that, won't you? And you won't think hard of me whatever comes?

MIRANDA. Why, Mary, I—I don't understand ——
(*goes C.*)

MARY. No, no, perhaps not—but —— (*sees DEANE'S warning look*) Good-bye —— (*hurries off stage R.*
U. E., *joins DEANE, and goes off quickly with him R.*
U. E. MIRANDA *picks up bundle and starts toward house L.* JOHN C. and R. C.)

JOHN. Mira,—wait a moment, won't you?

MIRANDA. (*pausing*) What is it, John?

JOHN. (*waving letter*) News—that will interest you ;
a letter from Hattie.

MIRANDA. (*coldly*) Well?

JOHN. She's going to Boston to be married.

MIRANDA. (*starting. Drops bundle*) Married!

JOHN. Yes. But, Mira—why does it surprise you so?

MIRANDA. Why—it—it—seemed kind of strange *you*
could be so *cheerful* over it.

JOHN. I, and why not?

MIRANDA. Why, because—because—I thought *you*
were going to marry her.

JOHN. (*laughing*) Oh, no, we were just good chums,
that's all. We found that out some time ago. Why, we
broke off the engagement that night of the donation
party. (*goes R.*)

MIRANDA. *That night!*

JOHN. (C.) Yes, and now I shall be on hand for the
wedding to wish the dear girl all the joy she can want,
for I'm going down to Boston next week.

MIRANDA. (*to JOHN, C.*) To Boston?

JOHN. Yes.

MIRANDA. To stay?

JOHN. I hope so. I want to push the invention, you
know.

MIRANDA. (*much affected*) If it's good-bye then—
I'll say it now. I—I must go in. (*starts to house L.*)

JOHN. (*catching at her hand*) Mira! You don't
mean that you care if—if I go?

MIRANDA. I—I was surprised, you know ——

JOHN. Speak, Mira—tell me—if I only thought you
cared. (*she turns away but still lets him keep her hand*)

Listen. I don't suppose I should tell you this when you're promised to another, but if you never let me look at you again I must—I love you—I always have loved you—and I always shall.

MIRANDA. John! (*she turns to him—they caress*)

JOHN. Dear heart! How happy you can make me. Mira, darling. (*kisses her*)

TOM. (*peering over top of stack*) Ah-ha, I saw that. (*bus. TOM slides down board, goes behind windlass. JOHN goes down L.*)

MIRANDA. (*quickly to TOM*) Oh, Tom, don't say anything, please don't.

TOM. (*back of windlass*) Are you going ter tell pa about them fish-hooks?

MIRANDA. Well, that depends.

TOM. Now see here, if ye keep *mum* about that I won't say nothin'. (*up stage R.*)

MIRANDA. Very well. Now *don't* forget, Tom. (*turns to go*)

TOM. (*turning quickly*) An' them tame ducks I shot—— (*MIRANDA turns quickly to TOM*) Kinder by mistake, you know. Might as well put them in, too.

MIRANDA. Oh, Tom, you said you were going to confess.

TOM. All right; if ye don't want to throw in the ducks, I'll tell.

MIRANDA. (*exchanging look with JOHN*) Well, put in the ducks, but be sure and don't say anything.

TOM. Now say, cross my heart—hope to die—so help me Moses.

MIRANDA. Cross my heart—now run away—please. (*turns up C.*)

TOM. (*turning to JOHN, leaning on windlass*) What you goin' to gimme?

JOHN. (*approaching TOM*) You young blackmailer, I'll tell you what I'd like to give you.

TOM. What?

JOHN. A sound tanning for bothering your sister this way.

TOM. But you won't, though, 'cause then you'd be bothering her.

JOHN. True. As for myself I haven't the remotest objection to your telling all you can. I rather glory in it. I think your sister's the nicest girl in the whole state of New Hampshire; so go ahead, do your worst. (*going down L.*)

TOM. (*gleefully*) Jerusalem! won't that be fun? She'll be so tickled, won't she?

(*MIRANDA shows discomfiture.*)

JOHN. (*whistles*) It's got to be blood money after all. Here, pirate, brigand, or whatever you are, what'll you take to be quiet?

TOM. How much you got? (*comes from behind windlass to JOHN, C.* JOHN, *emptying his pockets, takes out two knives and some small change; TOM looking them over*) I'll take that knife and twenty-five cents.

MIRANDA. (*L. C. and L. Distressed*) Tom! You make me ashamed of you.

TOM. (*R. C.*) Wal, I feel awful 'shamed o' you, but I ain't sayin' nothin'.

JOHN. (*handing knife and some money*) Here Tom, don't let it cut our friendship.

TOM. What?

JOHN. That knife.

TOM. (*tries to cut a stick with it*) Cut friendship? (*going disgustedly toward R. 2 E.*) That knife wouldn't cut nothin'.

(*Exit R. 2 E.*)

JOHN. (*C.*) Mira, I shall come back in three months—but, Ben Deane—are you promised to him?

MIRANDA. (*sitting on windlass*) No, John. I've never promised, but father has set his heart on it. He will listen to nothing else.

JOHN. I shall ask him for you to-day, Mira.

MIRANDA. He will be sure to refuse.

JOHN. What makes you think so, Mira? What has he against me?

MIRANDA. I don't think he has anything against you—how could he have—but he and Mr. Deane are great friends—and —

JOHN. And Ben Deane has influence and money. He is what they call a rising man—I know—while I—am a poor minister's son, a dreamer of dreams that fade out in the daylight; that never coin themselves into hard gold. But they shall. They shall come true. (MIRANDA rises from windlass and goes to him) With your face before me, your eyes smiling into mine—I shall work as I never worked before. What could not a man do with such an inspiration?

MIRANDA. John, I *know* you will succeed. I shall try to win father over—by degrees, you know. But I couldn't go against him. I never have. (*crosses L.*) Since mother died I have tried to take her place—she made me promise it when she was dying. You see it's a trust, John. (*holds out her hands to him. He takes them*)

JOHN. And you have been faithful, dear, as you are in everything. But you will write me when I am gone?

MIRANDA. Oh, yes.

JOHN. I shall be thinking every minute of the time I shall come back for you. Dear heart, you will keep faith even if the time seems long—you *won't* forget. (*bus.*)

MIRANDA. (L. C.) Never, John, never.

(*Enter HUGGINS, up R.; he starts on seeing them, and his face darkens.*)

HUGGINS. (*sternly, R.*) Mirandy.

MIRANDA. (*starting and going down L.* JOHN up L.) Father.

HUGGINS. (*confronting JOHN R. C.*) As for you, sir, I took you to be at least straight an' manly in yer dealin's. I didn't suspicion ye wuz under-handed 'nuff to keep company with one girl while ye made up to another. I tell ye it's mean, sneakin', dishonorable.

JOHN. (C.) I deny that I've been either mean or dishonorable. I am *not* going with any other girl.

HUGGINS. (R. C.) Air ye sure ye hadn't orter be?

JOHN. I don't know what you mean. I love Miranda as an honest man might. I meant to tell you this to-day and ask you for her. I ask you *now*.

HUGGINS. Do ye realize that my girl hez got ter marry some one that can take care of her—some one that has some standin' in the community, and can keep her like she's been used to livin'?

JOHN. It's true I haven't much money, or what *you* call standing, but my arms are strong and my courage isn't the kind to fail. With these I know I can make a place somewhere in this big world for Mira and me.

HUGGINS. Wal, that's purty far ahead, an' I've got other ideas for M'randy. (*starts L.*)

MIRANDA. (*pleadingly*) Father——

HUGGINS. Do ye care for him, M'randy?

MIRANDA. Oh, yes, yes.

HUGGINS. (*taking her face between his hands and looking earnestly into it*) Ye do? (*to JOHN*) See here, young man, if ye mean what's right and honorable, start out and see what ye can do. (*Enter DEANE R. 2 E. and listens*) The day ye come to me with a clean record, and the money to take care o' Mirandy—if she keeps on carin' fer ye—we'll see, we'll see.

(MIRANDA embraces her father.)

JOHN. (*takes HUGGINS' hand*) I will come back and I'll have the means to make her a home. I shall work till I do, but I will come back.

HUGGINS. Ye'll have to wait till then. (*takes stage R.*)

(JOHN goes up to feeder. LOUISA and LETITIA enter quickly with "Hello, MIRANDA," etc., and all girls go toward well talking. At the same time, TONER and JIM enter from house crossing toward wheat stack.)

TONER. That was a great dinner, Jim?

JIM. Well, I should say.

TONER. Miss Samantha makes the best custard pies of any one in this town.

(By this time they have got up to the stack.)

LETITIA. Let's go up on the stack.

TONER. *Where* yer goin' ?

LETITIA. Up on the wheat stack.

TONER. Well, you mustn't go up there. Ye might fall down that feeder. If ye did it would be all day with ye. A man got cut to pieces that way over at Blake's last week.

(JIM, TONER, LETITIA and MIRANDA then all talk together.)

DEANE. *(to JOHN)* So yer goin' to Boston with yer feeder ?

JOHN. Yes.

DEANE. Well, when you've made your fortune you'll think that the Bridgewater girls aren't good enough for you?

JOHN. I don't care to discuss that matter with you.

DEANE. *(aside)* I'll fix him yet if I have to throw him in that machine.

(Enter HUGGINS from house, talking as he crosses stage to C.)

HUGGINS. Well, boys, we've thrashed pretty well down to straw now. Silas, you hitch up and go over to the east barn. You'll find a big load of sheaves over there. Bring 'em over and we'll thrash 'em out.

TONER. All right, sir !

LETITIA. Come on, girls ; let's go over and ride back on top of the load.

(Exeunt LETITIA, LOUISA, JIM, and TONER, R. 2 E. MIRANDA laughingly watches them off. At same time enter from house SAMANTHA.)

SAMANTHA. *(crossing to C.)* Mirandy, I wish you would look up in that wheat stack. I believe there's a nest there. I heard that old speckled hen cackling and she wa'n't doin' that for nothin'.

(HUGGINS and SAMANTHA go into house L., talking to each other as they go off. JOHN looking over the machine starts it working. JOHN is feeding the machine, and DEANE, after looking off to see that he is not observed, says :)

DEANE. Now is my chance. (*rushes at the machine, seizes JOHN and tries to throw him into the feeder. They struggle down stage. JOHN disengages himself and throws DEANE down L.*)

JOHN. What do you mean?

DEANE. (*rising*) I come near falling into that feeder, didn't I?

JOHN. You came near throwing *me* in.

DEANE. You lie!

JOHN. No, I don't, and you know it. Ben Deane, you got something against me and I'm goin' to get it out of you right here if I have to hammer it out.

DEANE. Well, I guess you will have to hammer.

(*During this scene MIRANDA has passed around back of wheat stack. Her head appears at top of stack at "You'll have to hammer."* DEANE strikes at JOHN. JOHN strikes back and knocks him down. MIRANDA is now at top of stack and sees the fight and exclaims: "*Oh, John!*" DEANE recovers, seizes a club and strikes JOHN, who falls. MIRANDA screams. DEANE rushes to barn for pitchfork. MIRANDA screams again and faints, sliding down feeder. JOHN is up and runs to feeder in time to catch her. Other characters rush on from R. and L. at second scream and form picture for first curtain, as TOM, who rushes over toward DEANE, wrenches from him a pitchfork.)

(*For second curtain: MIRANDA is lying down C.; HUGGINS supporting her head, while JOHN hands him a cup of water. TOM crowds DEANE down R. and has the prongs of pitchfork up to his face.*)

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE.—*Interior of the village church at sunset, showing body of church, with organ, choir, and pulpit at back, with vestibule down front. Door R. I E. leading to belfry, door L. I E. to road. Three aisles and two sections of pews. Three windows on each side, and between windows, bracket in which are three candles. From these brackets hang wreaths of flowers and festoons of evergreens, also branches of fruit blossoms. Same decorations in front of pulpit and choir gallery. Great branches of fruit blossoms, mostly apple blossoms, in vase on table in front of pulpit. The whitewashed walls and ceiling of the church are entirely plain, and undecorated save for the flowers and greens. A red light streams in through the window on one side. Time, May. Before curtain rises organ is heard and then singing, as if for choir practice. Singing continues as curtain rises.*

DISCOVERED: *Girls and young men hanging flowers and greens, and arranging flowers on table. LETITIA, R. C., is handing TONER, who is on a ladder, a wreath, which he takes and proceeds to hang R. over entrance. JIM, R. C., crosses L., and half-way up the aisle.*

LETITIA. (R. and R. C.) A little lower, Silas. (*he changes it*) Thet's it. Now don't thet look cute? My, but M'randy's weddin's goin' to take the shine off'n everything thet's been in this meetin' house.

TONER. (*coming down from ladder, fixing a wreath*) 'Tain't enny too good for M'randy; but I can't say ez much for the groom. Somehow I never did set much by Ben Deane.

LETITIA. (*bus. with wreath*) Lordy, Sile! What ye talkin' about? Ben's one o' the best matches round here. Ain't all the girls runnin' after him hard ez they kin pelt? Ain't jealous, be ye?

(TONER comes over from ladder on this speech.)

TONER. Nary. Guess M'randy ain't the only girl in Bridgewater. (*passes ladder off R. 1 E.; gives LETITIA a significant look, which she receives with blushes and confusion, whereat he squeezes her hand*)

JIM. (*on L. H. side, bus. putting up wreath*) S'pose Sile thinks ez I do, thet John Harper ought to 'a' been the one. Queer, his goin' away right after the threshin'—most a year now—an' never come back since—
(*Enter EBEN., L. 1 E.*) Wal, Bridgewater wa'n't big enough for him.

EBEN. (*with old-fashioned lantern and keys. Looking about*) I swan! Ye hev made it look real nice, no mistake. (*looking at his watch—a very large silver one. TONER takes coat from bench and gets his right arm into it, then stands listening*) Land o' Goshen—did ye know 'twas most time for the ceremony? Parson'll be here afore long. Ye'd better be a-scuddin' out.

LETITIA (*arranging flowers*) Wal, don't you git in a feaze. We couldn't put the flowers up afore; they'd got all wilted.

EBEN. Say, hev ye heard that John Harper's come back?

ALL. (*coming down stage*) No.

EBEN. Yes.

ALL. When?

EBEN. This evenin'.

ALL. Ye don't say.

EBEN. But I do say. Been doin' real well in the city; makin' money like dirt. I tell ye thet feller's got grit. I allus did think John was likely, an' I say it again—though I dunno's I orter—I can't help feelin' that it ought to be John Harper a-standin' up here this evenin' with Mirandy Huggins, instead o' Ben Deane. There you've got my 'pinion whatever it's worth.

TONER. Thet's the ticket. You're right, Eb. There's more'n you feelin' thet way. (*tries to shake hands with EBEN., but his coat slips down and EBEN. can't find his hand. Boys and girls nod approval; bus.*)

JIM. (L.) Ye know last summer when he saved her life, time she most got into the threshing machine? Why, any one could 'a' told they thought their eyes o' one another.

LETITIA. (R. C.) Wal, what did John go right away for?

TONER. (R.) What wuz the use o' his stayin' 'round? Wa'n't her father dead set agin it? He saw 'twa'n't any use.

LETITIA. (R. and R. C.) M'randy allus wuz under her father's thumb. If it had been me I wouldn't 'a' give in quite so easy, an' took up with Ben Deane.

(TONER again squeezes LETITIA's hand.)

EBEN. I s'pose Seth Huggins thinks Ben Deane's a big man.

LETITIA. Say, girls, did ye see Hattie Burley when she came in on the stage to-day?

TONER. No.

LETITIA. She's Mis' Trombley now. Married a rich man down to Boston, an' puts on heaps o' style.

ALL. (*in chorus*) Ye don't say.

LETITIA. Yes. She's come up to visit her Aunt Bostwick, an' ye ought to see the mantilly she hed on. Some o' the girls wuz so took with it they were there to git the pattern of it before she could git her bunnit off. Jist 'cause it came from Boston. Oh, yes, she's wonderful sot up.

(HATTIE heard outside.)

TONER. (*looking off L. I E.*) Sh!—She's comin'.

(*Enter HATTIE, handsomely and stylishly dressed, L. I E.*)

HATTIE. (L. and L. C.) Why, how do you do, everybody?

(*All come about her, and shake hands, greeting her—*
"Howdy-do, Hattie," "Glad to see you," etc.
HATTIE drops purse down c.)

LETITIA. (R. C.) Howdy-do, Mis' Trombley. (*kisses her*) Real glad to see ye.

HATTIE. I want to help decorate for Miranda's wedding, bless her heart. Won't she be a lovely bride? And how pretty you're making it. It's a new thing for Bridgewater to have a wedding in the evening, isn't it?

LETITIA. (*proudly*) Wal, Bridgewater's a-comin' along an' a-keepin' up with the percession. Ye needn't be surprised at ennything in this town now. (*gives TONER a significant look*)

HATTIE. But, you know, coming from a quiet little out-of-the-way place like Boston, I can't help being a trifle dazed with the noise and bustle of this place.

LETITIA. Law! I thought Boston was considerable o' a town.

HATTIE. Well, it's trying to be. (*All look surprised*)

TONER. Guess that's what you call sarcasm—(*pronounces it sarcasm*) ain't it, Mis' Trombley?

HATTIE. (*with mock seriousness*) Why, you couldn't suspect me of that?

EBEN. (*disgustedly*) Oh, Lord!

(*Exit, R. I E.*)

HATTIE. (*TONER looks alarmed. She laughs heartily at his frightened face*) Don't worry; I'll forgive you. (*suddenly*) I've a message from aunty to Mrs. Blake, but I'll be back to the wedding.

(*Exit, L. I E.*)

(*Sunset fades out. Lights down.*)

LETITIA. (C., *looking off after HATTIE*) Gittin' too stuck up fer ennything, ain't she? But I'm going around there to-morrow, an' see if I can't git a pattern

of that sleeve of hern. Say, girls, Mis' Merrit's goin' to wear that green dress made over this time with brown. (*puts wreath on pew R.*)

JIM. Well, I guess thet'll last to the day o' judgment, an' she'll have to git wings to match.

(*Laughter and bus.*)

TONER. Ef it don't scare Gabriel so he can't toot.

LETITIA. Silas Toner! Wal, come, girls. Eb'll be after us.

(*The lights are lowered again, and it is almost dark in the church.*)

GIRLS. Thet's so.

(*They all troop out L. I E., followed by LETITIA and TONER. He goes last, with a very small derby hat on his head. Call of a night-bird outside.*)

(*Enter MARY, R. I E. Pauses with a look and gesture of distress as she sees the floral wedding bell hanging up C. She goes into pew L. of middle aisle, and kneeling, takes up Bible from bench and opens it. Enter JOHN R. I E. He comes slowly to middle aisle, pausing when he gets there. MARY, hearing him, rises, and turning suddenly confronts him. He starts.*)

JOHN. (*surprised*) Mary.

MARY. (*also surprised*) Mr. Harper! Why, when did you come?

JOHN. This evening.

MARY. (*advancing*) An' it is you, sure?

JOHN. It is I. No ghost, I assure you. But are you looking for one that you sit here all alone?

MARY. (*down L. C.*) No, I ain't lookin' for ghosts. I'm lookin' for myself; an' I never seem to find it 'cept when I git away from work an' folks. So I come here when it's open for choir practice. An' when it's kinder dark, an' the music plays soft, it seems as if things were borne in on me that never come out in the

light an' the noise. It's somethin' like the Comforter that this tells about. (*indicating Bible in her hand*)

JOHN. (*with feeling*) I beg your pardon for intruding. I'll go. (*starts to cross to R. C.*)

MARY. No, no, please don't. (*crosses to C.*) There's somethin' I want to say to you. I didn't know as I'd ever get the chance, you've been away so long.

JOHN. Yes, it's almost a year.

MARY. They say you've done amazin' well down in the city.

JOHN. Yes, I've done far better than I expected in so short a time. But where have you been all these months?

MARY. In Concord.

JOHN. (*amazed and puzzled*) In Concord?

MARY. Yes. They said I was in a madhouse, didn't they?

JOHN. Yes.

MARY. (*bitterly spoken*) The very children run from me in the road. No one will believe me when I tell them it is a lie. But *you* don't think so, Mr. Harper—you don't think so?

JOHN. No, Mary, if you tell me you were not. But oh, if I only could have known where you were. I tried so hard to find you.

MARY. To find *me*?

JOHN. Yes, you could have set something right then—something I would have given my life to have had set right.

MARY. Can't I do it *now*?

JOHN. It doesn't matter now.

MARY. I s'pose you know who's goin' to be married here to-night. (*puts Bible on bench R. C.*)

JOHN. Yes.

MARY. It's about that I wanted to speak to you.

JOHN. (*pained*) Please don't, Mary. Your intention is kind—I know that—but I can't quite bear it yet. It's only one case more of a man's blind infatuation for a woman, whose affection—if she ever had any—was so shallow she forgot him the moment he

was out of her sight. But I don't mean it shall wreck my life. I shall give my whole energies to my work. It's not so deep a problem as marriage—and it's more satisfying in the solution.

MARY. (*looking keenly at him*) John Harper, I don't know whether you mean what you say, or whether you're trying to cover up somethin' with words. But I tell you if Mirandy Huggins dies, her death lies at your door. (*with great intensity*)

JOHN. What do you mean?

MARY. I mean this: thet she's a-growin' that white and thin, she ain't more'n a shadow of what she used to be. She's breakin' her heart for you—(*JOHN smiles cynically*) an' you stand there calm and quiet, an' smile over it. The time'll come when you'll see what you've done, an' it'll haunt ye worse'n those ghosts you talked about. Places o' torment ain't all laid up for the next world. (*taking stage L.*)

JOHN. (*following her*) You don't know what you're saying. You think she cares for me—so did I. I wrote and wrote and never a word came back. (*MARY looks surprised*) Then I heard she was engaged to Ben Deane—I knew then why she didn't write.

MARY. (*facing him*) John Harper, are you telling the truth?

JOHN. I am.

MARY. Then I tell you there's devil's work somewhere. She *did* write you. (*JOHN starts*) And she never got any answer. *I* know what I'm sayin'—I've seen things since I came back. Mr. Huggins was sick quite a spell just after you left an' Ben Deane was takin' charge of the post-office, an' I know what I'm talkin' about when I tell you she kept on believin' in ye day after day, till it seemed sure you'd forgot her, an' she's marryin' this man 'cause her father wants it, and she's breakin' her heart and dyin' for you.

JOHN. (*in an agonized tone*) Mary! my God! (*sinks on bench R. C.*)

MARY. (*taking stage L.*) You'll see it when it's too late. If you'd only stayed here.

JOHN. If I only had. But I wanted to be about my life-work—and what is it all worth with an empty heart, and a life with the sweetness and peace gone out of it forever? What is it worth? (*rises, takes stage R. and R. C.*)

MARY. (*bitterly*) Thet's what *I* say, and I know—yes, *I* know.

JOHN. (*starting toward her*) If this is true—and she suffers—as I have—no (*away again*), no, I can't have it so.

MARY. It *is* true.

JOHN. (*suddenly*) But the letters—you say Ben Deane was in the post-office—then he *took* them. (*to MARY*)

MARY. I didn't *say* so. (*goes slightly L.*)

JOHN. (C.) Oh, he's none too good for it. I believe he meant to push me into the machine that day.

MARY. (*turns quickly as if hearing footsteps off R. I E.*) Hush, some one is coming. I beg of you to go. (*he hesitates*) Go, go, I beg of you. (*JOHN exits quickly L. I E., MARY looking after and slightly following him*) What will he do? No, no, he won't stop it—it must go on—*his* weddin' and *hers*. Does heaven know anything about such matches ez thet? If they do, it must make the angels sorry. (*solemnly*) The Lord forgive 'em both an'—(*looking up with clasped hands*) help me to bear it—help me to bear it.

(*Exit L. I E.*)

(*Enter HUGGINS and EBEN., R. I E. HUGGINS looks rather more careworn and less rugged than before.*)

HUGGINS. (C.) Wal, Eb, how ye gettin' on for lights? Did ye git them extra ones? (*up and about aisles and around stage*)

EBEN. (R. C.) Yes, siree, an' we've got three candles instid o' two in every one o' them places. (*pointing to brackets*) Oh, we'll have a 'lumination thet'll make the town talk, I *tell* you. (*crosses L. C. Sees purse and picks it up*)

HUGGINS. Thet's right, Eb. I want suthin' that ain't ever been seen in Bridgewater afore. Thet's why I had the weddin' in the evenin'. (*sits on bench R. C.*)

EBEN. Thet ain't been done here afore.

HUGGINS. No. And I thought if the meetin' house wuz all trimmed and lit up 'twould be suthin' they wouldn't forgit very soon. My girl's goin' to be married and I want folks to know 'tain't no common doin's; it's suthin' to be remembered. Deane's the best match in town, too; got more brains'n some hull families. Thet feller'll go to the legislater yit, see if he don't—thet is, o' course, arter me.

EBEN. Yes, sir, *arter you*.

HUGGINS. Lost it last time, but it's a-lookin' purty well for me jest now. Guess I'll go up next time sure.

EBEN. (*aside*) Seems to me he went up *last* time, sure.

HUGGINS. And say, Eb, I want thet bell rung, so's folks'll know this is M'randy Huggins' weddin'. Might as well start in on thet now. Goin' to hev a weddin' march, too. Mis' Trombley sez they allus do thet to big weddin's in the city.

(*Enter HATTIE, apparently searching for something,*
L. I E.)

HATTIE. Oh, Mr. Todd, did you find a purse?

EBEN. Yes; jest picked it up. (*hands it to her*)

HATTIE. That's it. Thank you.

EBEN. You're quite welcome.

HATTIE. Mr. Huggins, pardon me. I didn't see you. (*as EBEN. goes off HATTIE sees HUGGINS for the first time, EBEN. having intercepted the view. Exit EBEN., R. 2 E., into belfry*) I just met John Harper. Did you hear how splendidly he's been doing in Boston?

(*Ready bell, R.*)

HUGGINS. No. Haven't cared to.

HATTIE. (L. C.) Well, it's wonderful. He'll be a rich man in a little while.

HUGGINS. S'pose you'll be around to the weddin'?

HATTIE. Yes. And what a pretty wedding it's going to be.

HUGGINS. Wal, I callate it's goin' ahead of ennything we've hed in Bridgewater in *one* while. We're goin' to hev three candles in every one o' them places. (*rising—pointing*) We ain't a-stoppin' for expenses *this* trip. (*Bell begins to toll in a slow, doleful manner.* HUGGINS *starts up angrily and going to R. 2 E., opens door to belfry and shouts up to EBEN.*) Ebenezer Todd, what be you a-doin'? Is this a funeral? Jest see if ye can't jerk thet bell a little lively, an' make it seem sort o' festive like. (*bell begins to ring merrily*) There, thet's some like it, Mis' Trombley. (*sits again*)

HATTIE. Yes, that's better. I only wish Miranda didn't look so poorly. I was shocked at the change in her.

HUGGINS. Do you think she looks bad?

HATTIE. Yes, I do. What is the matter with her?

HUGGINS. Matter with her? Why, there ain't nothin' the matter with her—nothin' 'tall.

HATTIE. Yes, there is, Mr. Huggins, an' there's more than me asking what's the matter with Miranda.

HUGGINS. (*irritated*) Wal, they'd better look to home, instead o' pokin' their noses into things that don't concern 'em. There ain't nothin' the matter with Miranda as I know on.

HATTIE. I tell you there is. You can't look at her growin' paler an' thinner every day an' say that.

HUGGINS. She's been workin' too stiddy on her weddin' finery, that's all.

HATTIE. (*over to him*) No, it ain't all, an' if people around here are afraid to tell you the truth, I'm not.

HUGGINS. What do you mean?

HATTIE. (*indignantly—though with great feeling*) I mean you're a-marryin' her to a man she don't care for, an' she's wearin' her heart out for another. You're a-drivin' her into the grave. An' when ye can look out there—(*pointing out of window.* HUGGINS *rises, dazed*) and see her headstone thet'll be no whiter'n her face is now, mebbe you'll see plainer'n other folks writ on it: "Died of a broken heart." (*goes L. C.*)

HUGGINS. Stop! Stop! I tell ye. How dare ye talk that way to me? (*sits down again as if broken and weak*)

HATTIE. (*very indignantly and angrily*) Because it's true, and if Miranda hed half my spirit you'd a-heard it from her own lips long ago. When I saw her, I jest couldn't stand it, an' I came here on purpose to tell you, Seth Huggins, if you weren't harder than stone, you'd stop now afore you'd let your ambition drive ye over the dead body of your own child.

(*Exit L. 1 E.*)

HUGGINS. (*breaking out angrily*) It ain't true. No, it ain't true. It's a lie. (*pause*) Why do they say it? (*pause*) Oh, if it should be so! (*rising*) What's goin' to the legislater, what's *ennything* without *her*? I don't want nothin' without my little girl. (*staggers weakly back, sinks into pew up L., three seats from back—burying face in hands and sobbing*)

(*Enter EBEN., R. 1 E.*)

EBEN. (*does not see HUGGINS. Takes out watch and looks. Enter DEANE L. 1 E., crosses to C.*) Why, Mr. Deane, you're early. (*anxiously*) Others ain't come, hev they?

DEANE. No, I came on ahead. Got things all fixed up, ain't ye?

EBEN. Wal, I callate there ain't nothin' slow about me; guess I'd better ring a little, bein' there's time.

(*Exit R. 2. E.*)

(*Enter MARY, L. 1 E.*)

DEANE. (*starts R., then turns and sees MARY*) Mary! You here!

(*Bell rings off R. U. E.*)

MARY. I saw *you* coming here and followed you. I got somethin' to say to ye. I ain't had a chance to before.

DEANE. Some other time. (*starts toward L. I E.*)

MARY. (c., *firmly spoken*) No, there won't be no other time. Ef ye go out o' here I'll follow you. (*he turns back*) Ye've got to listen. (*slight pause*)

(HUGGINS, *aroused by her voice, unseen by them, listens.*)

DEANE. (*angrily—after slight pause*) How dare you come here?

MARY. (*defiantly*) How dare *you* come here? How dare you swear in the sanctuary to love and cherish thet girl when ye know ye're killin' her? You hev ruined *my* life; ain't thet enough without ruinin' hers?

DEANE. I won't listen to you — (*starts to go; she stops him*)

MARY. You will listen to me. Ye've got to hear me out. Ye know all ye care for Mirandy Huggins is her money. An' ye know she don't care fer you. Ye know her father is a-forcin' her into this 'cause he wants your help for the nomination. You know who she *does* care for; an' ef ye hed enny heart or soul, 'cept what's turned to greed fer gold, ye couldn't do it.

(*Enter JOHN R., goes up, and remains unobserved, listening.*)

DEANE. What do you mean by her caring for some one else?

MARY. Ye know it's John Harper—that it's allus been him. Didn't she kerry letters to the post to him after he went away, an' you was takin' Mr. Huggins' place in the office? Mebbe her letters never went, mebbe his got no further than that office—an' mebbe you know why. (*meaningly over his shoulder*)

DEANE. That's a lie.

MARY. (*very decidedly—hand raised*) It is the truth.

DEANE. You have no proofs.

MARY. (*staggered at this and realizing its truth*)

No, I ain't no proof. But I'm jest as sure as if I had.

DEANE. I suppose you've told.

MARY. No, I promised you not to speak. Mebbe I've lost what some folks call honor; but I've thet kind left thet ud stand bein' burnt at a slow fire 'fore it would break the faith it had sworn to keep. You don't know what thet means.

DEANE. (*angrily*) Now you go. (*crosses to R. C. and R.*)

MARY. (C.) No! Not till ye've heard what I've got to say. S'pose I tell how you took me down to Concord, promisin' to marry me next day. Thet ye never kept yer word, but lied to me as ye allus do. S'pose I tell how I starved, an' was sick for months on the charity of the town, and when at last I was able to work, I toiled night an' day that I might save enough to get back here to tell 'em what you are.

DEANE. (*sneeringly*) They wouldn't believe you. They think you're crazy.

MARY. Another of your lies.

DEANE. They all believe it. Ye'd better keep still. I shall marry her. (*turns away*)

MARY. Then may God be as pitiless to you as you have been to me and to her; and when ye cry to Him for mercy, may He turn from ye forever, as you have turned from me.

(*Exit, L. I E.*)

JOHN. (*confronting DEANE*) You scoundrel!

DEANE. So you've been listening, like the sneak that you are.

JOHN. Where are those letters?

DEANE. You'd better not talk too much about what you can't prove. It might cost you dear.

JOHN. I'll make it cost *you* dear. Are you going to listen to that poor girl you've wronged, and give up this marriage?

DEANE. I'll tell you right now that in less than half an hour M'randy Huggins will be my wife.

JOHN. Your wife by fraud and treachery.

DEANE. Well, you and Mary Barden will do to go together with your meanness an' jealousy. But I warn ye now if ye attempt to make any trouble here, ye'll wish ye hadn't. Ye know the old man would see his girl dead 'fore he'd give her to you; and M'randy's too proud to take up with a man thet's cast her off. I'll marry Mirandy Huggins, an' ye can't prevent me.

(HUGGINS *rises in his seat.*)

JOHN. (*springing on him*) You sneaking coward I'll ——

HUGGINS. Hold on there! I've got somethin' to say—jest about now. (JOHN *drops his hands.* HUGGINS *comes down c.*) Ben Deane, is this here true? Is that girl lyin' or not?

DEANE. Lyin' —— Of course she is. She's crazy anyhow, you ought to know that.

HUGGINS. But ye stood there and took it like a man that was guilty—ye never said no to it—ye never once denied it. Am I givin' my girl to a coward and a rascal—speak up, man—why don't ye speak?

DEANE. She lied, I tell you. She's nothin' to me.

(*People heard talking outside L.*)

HUGGINS. (*imploringly*) Then prove it to me if ye ken. Folks'll be here in a minute, an' it'll be too late. Prove it to me, Ben.

DEANE. Hain't ye known me long enough to believe me before ye would her? Did ye ever hev cause to suspicion me?

HUGGINS. I dunno's I ever did, but I hev now. My girl's future is in your hands and I've got to know the truth. D'ye hear me?—the truth. (*Enter Jim, L. I E., who goes up aisle L., crosses over and lights candles R.; lights up. Organist follows him and takes place at organ*) It's too late now. (*sits down R. C.* JOHN *down R.* DEANE *against pew L. C.*)

(*Enter EBEN, L. I E. with lantern, speaking as he comes*

on and followed by MR. GIBBS who goes up center aisle and mounts the pulpit.)

EBEN. All right, Mr. Gibbs.

(Enter MRS. GIBBS and CALEB. Also two couples of villagers, who go up C. and take seats R. and L. nearest the pulpit.)

MRS. GIBBS. (E. C.) Wal, Mr. Todd, I suppose the next one will be you and Samanthy.

EBEN. I hope so, Mis' Gibbs—but I can't tell. Samanthy's such a caretaker she never gits time to think about it. An' sometimes I git real tuckered out a-waitin'!—I do so.

MRS. GIBBS. Wal, ye want to keep up a good heart. She'll come around to it after a spell. (EBEN. crosses and lights candles L. MRS. GIBBS, aside) Poor Eb!

(Organist begins to play wedding march. MRS. GIBBS and CALEB go up C. and take first vacant seat from pulpit, R. Enter L. I E. LETITIA and TONER, who forgets to remove his hat until he is reminded by LETITIA, when he jerks it off quickly. They go into pew next to MRS. GIBBS and CALEB. HATTIE follows and sits up L. Next comes SAMANTHA with TOM in tow, hanging back. When they get C., TOM stumbles and flounders down R. SAMANTHA jerks him up, fixes his necktie, etc. Meanwhile LOUISA enters and walks briskly up C., swinging her skirts as she goes, and enters pew next to HATTIE, L. TOM goes into same pew and SAMANTHA goes in with TONER and LETITIA, R. Enter bridesmaids in couples. EBEN. meets them C. and ushers them up on either side of the pulpit, returning and standing in aisle next to SAMANTHA. MIRANDA comes on after bridesmaids are in place; she is pale and walks slowly. HUGGINS rises, looking at her in great distress. DEANE takes a step toward her.)

JOHN. (crossing C.) Stop!

(*All turn and look. Organ stops. Enter MARY and stands down L. against first pew. As MIRANDA sees JOHN, she drops her flowers, and reels. DEANE catches her.*)

MIRANDA. John!

JOHN. (*to HUGGINS*) You wouldn't let me speak to her at the house. I want to speak to her now. Miranda, tell me, did you write to me? Did you mean to keep faith with me?

MIRANDA. (*crossing to JOHN*) How can you ask, when you were the first to break faith?

JOHN. I? Why, I wrote you every day.

MIRANDA. Every day? Oh, John, are you telling me true?

JOHN. As God hears me.

MIRANDA. I never had one word. Didn't my letters tell you so?

JOHN. Your letters? I never got any letters from you.

MIRANDA. (*looking at DEANE, who avoids her glance*) What does it mean? I wrote you so many.

JOHN. (*to DEANE*) Where are those letters? Coward! Sneak! Answer me!

DEANE. (*crossing to JOHN. MIRANDA L.*) How dare you come in here and interrupt this ceremony? Stand aside. Come, Mirandy; don't listen to him.

MIRANDA. (*recoiling from him and crossing quickly to her father*) Oh, no, no, father; I can't marry that man. I've tried to think I could, but I can't. To stand up there and say those words, carin' heart and soul for another, would be a lie, and I can't do it, father, I can't do it. (*sinks down sobbing at his feet, and catches at his hands*)

HUGGINS. (*raising her—much overcome*) There, Miranda, don't cry. I never knowed you did keer so much. (*caressing her, laying his head down on hers*) There, there, I ain't goin' to force you into anything to make you feel like that, 'cause you're my little girl arter all. (*DEANE starts toward him. MARY takes a step*

down stage) You stand aside, sir. I won't let ye speak to her. *You ain't to be trusted.* (DEANE *falls back.* HUGGINS *sees* MARY) Mary Barden, what's John Harper to you?

MARY. (*surprised*) John Harper? Nothin'. (*to* DEANE, *as he crosses toward her*) So you've been lyin' about him too, have ye?

(DEANE *looks deliberately around and exits* L. I E. *All watch him off, then* HUGGINS *speaks.*)

HUGGINS. How that man has deceived me. And I thought he was so straightforward and honest, too — (*looking affectionately at* MIRANDA, *who has gone slightly* R.) And she's been sich a good little girl to me. God bless her. (*kisses her forehead. Momentary pause*) John, you love her and you want to take care of her, don't you?

JOHN. Yes, sir, I do.

HUGGINS. Then take her with my blessin'. (*calls*) Elder Gibbs! (*motions to* JOHN *and* MIRANDA *to go to pulpit*)

CURTAIN

(*At second curtain* HUGGINS *is down* L. *with* MARY, *gently leading her back to his pew.*)

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